

Custodianship on the Periphery: Archives, Power and Identity Politics in Post-Apartheid  
Umbumbulu, KwaZulu-Natal

By

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## **Abstract**

Since 1994, there have been significant shifts in official systems of record-keeping in South Africa. Notions of tradition and custom have been reconfigured within a legislative environment and in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, what was previously held separately as the domain of the 'tribal subject' (tradition and custom) now intersects with the domain of the democratic citizen (legislation, government records and archives). The intersection of these domains has opened up new cultural and political spaces in which the past in various forms is being actively managed. Through a study of contemporary Umbumbulu in southern KwaZulu-Natal, this thesis explores a host of custodial and record-keeping forms and practices, often in settings not conventionally associated with custodianship and archives.

The study takes as its point of departure the Ulwazi Programme, a web initiative of the eThekweni Municipality that its advocates term a collaborative, online, indigenous knowledge resource. It then considers various other locations in Umbumbulu in which the past is being dealt with by certain traditional leaders and local historians such as Desmond Makhanya and Siyabonga Mkhize. The thesis argues that the activities of the subjects of the study reveal a blurred distinction between practices of custodianship and the production of versions of history and posits that they might be best described as practices of curation. Their activities show that the past, in a range of forms, is being mobilised in efforts to gain access to land and government resources, and to enter into the record marginalised historical claims and materials.

Moreover, the types of knowledge that flow from their activities at a local level serve to unsettle dominant modes of knowing, including those related to custodianship, archives and identity, and they shape socio-political relations, with amongst others, the Zulu royal family and the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal. The thesis advances the argument that in contemporary KwaZulu-Natal the terms, and the act, of consignment – of depositing materials in a repository, out of public circulation and with limited access – an action that enables both remembering and, once preserved, the possibility of forgetting, far from being a defined, archival procedure, is a tenuous, volatile, indeed actively negotiated and navigated, process.

## **Preface**

Prior to registering for a doctorate my studies had focussed on languages and linguistics. In 2001, I completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in French, Zulu and Media and Communication at the then University of Natal and then went on to do an Honours degree in Zulu linguistics and teaching Zulu as a second language. In 2003, I completed a Master's degree in Zulu Language and Literature at the University of Natal. My Master's dissertation focussed on the functions of dreams and visions in an African Independent Church, namely the Shembe church at Inanda, near Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. My Zulu language competency, developed through four years of intensive Zulu language courses, greatly facilitated this type of ethnographic research. Once I had been awarded my degree, I moved to the United Kingdom and helped to develop the first digital video archive of human communication at the Department of Human Communication Sciences at University College London (UCL). I also worked at UCL as a research assistant investigating the use of digital video to improve cross-cultural pharmacy consultations. I thus brought this multi-disciplinary training and experience to bear on my doctoral research.

I began my Ph.D. research in May 2009. My interest in pursuing doctoral studies stemmed from the Ulwazi Programme, an online, collaborative project of the eThekweni Municipality in Durban that claimed to record and share indigenous knowledge. I was interested in the potential it offered as multi-authored digital cultural archive. I wanted to understand how a project of this nature, which championed a seemingly democratised, grassroots approach to the production and preservation of local histories and culture, functioned within the contemporary cultural politics of KwaZulu-Natal and how it related



to established notions of a homogenous Zulu identity, which have long been mobilised in the region for political ends. I registered for my Ph.D. in the Social Anthropology department at the University of Cape Town and undertook the research as part of the Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative, which fosters the type of transdisciplinary approach that my doctoral research demanded. The study involves elements of ethnography, historical research and the paying of attention to various forms of media including digital formats, written texts, formal interviews and conversations. As such, it is positioned as a contribution to the emerging field of Anthrohistory, as distinct from Historical Anthropology or the History of Anthropology (Murphy *et al*, 2011). If anything, it gestures towards an anthropology of history.

## **Acknowledgements**

Doctoral research is a long and at times, lonely, process that would have been all the more arduous without the support of key individuals and institutions. I am deeply grateful to my family in Durban and in Cape Town – my brothers, sister and parents – to numerous friends, for their encouragement and support during periods of fieldwork and writing, and to Clémence, for her love and understanding, and for keeping me sane throughout the past few years.

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## **Dedication**

To Clémence for being there from the beginning and to Carolyn for guiding me to the end.

## **Table of Contents**

Chapter 1 – Introduction	1
Chapter 2 – Sharing Indigenous Knowledge	51
Chapter 3 – “Some of these things aren’t written in books, we only have history”	116
Chapter 4 – (Re)discovering the correct history	170
Chapter 5 – “We are a family of history here...”	216
Chapter 6 – Conclusion	264
Works Cited	286

## ***Chapter One – Introduction***

Since 1994, there have been significant shifts in official systems of record-keeping in South Africa. With the country's transition to democracy and the ascendancy of the African National Congress (ANC) government, notions of tradition and custom have been reconfigured within a legislative and policy environment. In the present-day province of KwaZulu-Natal, what was previously largely held separately as the domain of the 'tribal subject' (tradition and custom) now intersects with the domain of the democratic citizen (legislation and archives). In the former, the practices of referencing the past are commonly understood to depend on 'memory' whilst in the latter they are based on government records (Harris, 2012). The intersection of these two domains has resulted in current official systems of record-keeping investing in the notion of 'indigenous knowledge' – a classification that overlaps substantially with both tradition and custom – as one of the dominant modes of engaging with the past in the post-apartheid period.

The terms 'tradition' and 'custom' are often conflated and used to describe long-established cultural practices but Terence Ranger calls for a clear distinction between the two. Ranger (1983: 212), discussing the ways in which British colonial administrators invented "African traditions for Africans" in order to establish and maintain control in colonised regions, argues that while customs are flexible, traditions are invariable. He maintains that the colonists' respect for 'tradition' in Britain caused them to seek what they saw as traditional in Africa, resulting in the codification and promulgation of these 'traditions', thereby transforming "flexible custom into hard prescription" (212).

Traditions are used to inculcate values and norms of behaviour through repetition, which implies continuity with the past and, where possible, a suitable historic past (Hobsbawm, 1983: 1). However, as Martin Chanock (1985) writes, so-called customary law was invented during the colonial period and, far from encoding long-standing traditions, it comprised new ideas that responded to changing political climates. Customary law as an “invention of tradition” thus served as an effective tool of colonial administration that could be reworked to suit contemporary conditions. That is not to say that traditions could be invented without constraint. Indeed, the notion of “invention” can obfuscate the history of traditions, or elements thereof. Carolyn Hamilton (1998) shows how reinterpretations of Shaka Zulu have limits to their invention. She argues that the image of Shaka Zulu is one that is established over time, through processes that can be traced historically and which “set limits on the extent and form of its manipulation in the service of politics” (26 – 27). In this thesis I am interested in how different actors see tradition and custom (in various forms) as a political resource and mobilise them in various ways in contemporary Umbumbulu and KwaZulu-Natal.

In the thesis, I probe tradition, custom, indigenous knowledge and other practices for indications of the active management of materials of and from the past, processes and activities, which I refer to and conceptualise as ‘custodianship’. The primary meaning of custodianship is the safe-keeping and protection of materials relating to the past, which may or may not involve limiting or promoting access to such materials (Oxford English Dictionary, 2013). I examine how the junction of the domains of tradition and custom and government records has also opened up new cultural and political spaces in which a

multitude of custodial and record-keeping forms and practices are evident, often in settings not conventionally associated with archives and custodianship.

Record-making, record-keeping and custodianship are inherently political activities and there resides significant power in the constitution of archives and the control and custodianship of the materials therein (Schwartz and Cook, 2002). In post-apartheid KwaZulu-Natal, claims to the custodianship of tradition, custom and other bodies of knowledge of the past are at the heart of local politics and the source of contestation in various contexts. The ANC government recognises the power of claims to custodianship of the past and through projects at municipal and provincial level it has made efforts to gain access to, and official custodianship over, different bodies of knowledge of the past.

From the beginning of the colonial era, throughout the period of 'native administration' and under the apartheid structure of bantustans,<sup>1</sup> access to resources for the majority of inhabitants of the present-day KwaZulu-Natal region was determined through reference to loosely defined bodies of tradition and custom, the custodians of which were the chiefs, recognised by the colonial and later apartheid governments. In the former bantustan of KwaZulu, the Zulu nationalist organisation, Inkatha, the rulers of the homeland and collaborators with the apartheid state, supported the structure of chiefly power and the chiefs' roles as custodians of tradition and custom. Inkatha-supporting chiefs, in turn, contributed to the spread of Inkatha ideology and the promulgation of an essentialised notion of Zuluness – the 'Zulu' as a unified, homogenous nation based on

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<sup>1</sup> A bantustan (also known as black African homeland or simply homeland) was a territory set aside for black inhabitants, divided on ethnic lines, of South Africa and South West Africa (now Namibia), as part of the policy of apartheid.



the fictive idea of a common history – that was integral to Inkatha's maintenance of power.

In the post-apartheid period, established notions of Zuluness, closely linked to tradition and custom, continue to feature prominently in public discourse and function as a powerful political tool. For example, the current state president, Jacob Zuma, has used a thinly-veiled strategy of corralling Zulu-speakers, skilfully mobilising Zuluness, tradition and custom, and the support of traditional leaders in KwaZulu-Natal, in his efforts to secure and maintain political power at a national level (Gumede, 2012: 11). In KwaZulu-Natal, the government's legitimacy in the province rests, in part, on supporting and protecting the Zulu monarchy as the foremost symbol of Zulu identity, one that is still accepted by a large percentage of KwaZulu-Natal's population as central to their identity.<sup>2</sup> In particular, this has involved strengthening ANC relations with the Zulu king and traditional leaders who see themselves, and are regarded by many, as the custodians of Zulu tradition and custom (Buthelezi, 2012: 50). This has resulted in a close working relationship between the Zulu king and the provincial premier, Zweli Mkhize, whose office provides an annual budget to the king as part of the province's yearly spending. That is not to say that the ANC's government's appeals to Zuluness are solely focussed on the Zulu monarchy, tradition and custom. Hylton White (2012) argues compellingly

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to draw a clear distinction between notions of identity as a political tool and identity as a mode of subjective, self-identification to a group or groups. Michael Hogg and Dominic Abrams (1988: 7) write that belonging to a group "confers social identity, or a shared/collective representation of who one is". That is not to say that individuals with unique life experiences cannot "have a repertoire of many different identities to draw upon" (19) in different contexts. Indeed, Catherine Campbell, Gerhard Maré and Cheryl Walker (1995: 288), writing on ethnicity as a form of social identity, argue for distinct, yet intertwined manifestations of the term as, "the lived experience of ordinary people as perceived members of an ethnic group" and "the fashioning and mobilisation of this experience by political brokers for political ends."

that President Jacob Zuma's declaration of "his Zuluness" in the run-up to the 2009 South African elections facilitated a new kind of personal, affective engagement between president and voters that departed from older lines of ethnic association. White writes that through his embrace of Zuluness as a source of personal strength, Zuma offered his supporters a seemingly intimate, personal connection with him and therefore a less mediated engagement with the agency of the state.

### **Custodianship on the Periphery**

In this thesis, I aim to assess how established ideas about archives and the practices that I have termed custodianship play out in contemporary KwaZulu-Natal. I do this through a case study of contemporary Umbumbulu, an area south of Durban in KwaZulu-Natal where claims to custodianship of the past, tradition and custom have long been intimately linked to political power. The study examines four different sites in post-apartheid Umbumbulu in which claims are being made to custodianship over materials of the past and where the past, in a range of forms, is being dealt with in diverse and interesting ways. It explores the claims and activities of the Ulwazi Programme, a digital libraries project run by the eThekweni<sup>3</sup> Municipality in Durban, those of certain traditional leaders within the municipality, as well as those of two local, non-professional historians, Siyabonga Mkhize and Desmond Makhanya. My initial focus was on the Ulwazi Programme but the work of Verne Harris prompted me to look beyond this government initiative to other sites of custodial activity in Umbumbulu. Harris (2002: 64 – 65), following Derrida, argues that what is recorded and preserved in archives is only a "sliver

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<sup>3</sup> eThekweni is the Zulu name for Durban. eThekweni Municipality is the municipality that runs the city of Durban.

of a sliver of a sliver” of what may have actually happened. His work raised the question of what the Ulwazi Programme was not recording and the wealth of material with archival value that fell outside of the ambit of government institutions and efforts. While this opened the scope of my enquiry to a broad range of possibilities, I narrowed my focus to other activities in Umbumbulu that were not included in the Ulwazi Programme but to which significant custodial attention was being given.

By focusing on Umbumbulu in the post-apartheid era, the main goal of the thesis is to understand how claims to custodianship over materials relating to the past and concomitant practices in a range of forms, mainly based on local ways of knowing and doing, and originating from within and beyond the ambit of official archives, facilitate new understandings about custodianship, the place and power of archives and contemporary identity politics in KwaZulu-Natal. In the thesis, I investigate how various claims to custodianship of the past and related custodial activities, which largely emanate from locations that are not commonly perceived as archival, and in some cases, from positions of marginality, have a bearing on and moderate how we think about custodianship and archives. I examine how those looking to make a claim on the past and put forward a particular version of it, marshal different types of evidence in order to strengthen their cases. I explore which materials they lay claim to and assert custodianship over, and why. Which resources do they have at their disposal, how do they navigate them, employ and present them in the public realm? What is the motivation behind, and the effects of, this custodial and productive activity?

The study of custodianship in Umbumbulu is crosscut by questions of identity politics in contemporary KwaZulu-Natal. A great deal of academic research deals with the rise of a broad Zulu ethnic consciousness in the early decades of the twentieth century (Marks, 1986; Cope, 1993 and La Hausse, 2000) and on iterations of modern Zulu nationalism and its identification with the Inkatha movement, in the period from the 1970s to the 1990s (Maré and Hamilton, 1987; Golan, 1991; Maré, 1992; Harries, 1993). Although functioning in different contexts and with different political agendas, these successive Zulu nationalist movements promoted a particular version of the past and an overarching and generic notion of identity that at different times, both united and constrained the various constituencies in what is today the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

The contemporary playing out of identity politics in KwaZulu-Natal is fraught with potential repercussions, perhaps best illustrated by the Nhlapo Commission on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims, beginning in 2007, to which various clans<sup>4</sup> in KwaZulu-Natal made applications for recognition of their pre-Zulu histories and identities. The Zulu king, Goodwill Zwelithini, responded to these challenges by rallying the support of chiefs loyal to the monarchy and supportive of a singular Zulu identity, as well as government at provincial and national levels, and denounced the applications as “mischievous challenges”, not only to his authority as the Zulu king but to the “Zulu nation” as a whole. The result of this backlash led six of the eleven applicants to withdraw their applications and four of the remaining five to seek protection from the

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<sup>4</sup> I am aware of the complex genealogy of the term ‘clan’. I use it here and throughout the thesis not as an analytical concept nor as a noun suggesting a social entity but to refer to an *isibongo* or surname of the people who share a common *isibongo* and who trace their descent to a common ancestor. I use the English word ‘clan’ as this is the term that the subjects of my study use to refer to a particular *isibongo*.

Commission following several death threats (Sithole, 2008: xv – xvi). In the thesis, I probe how some of the contemporary custodial practices in Umbumbulu, based on local understandings and experience, function in the mobilisation of marginalised historical claims and materials. I look at how they shape knowledge and are brought to bear on imaginings of self and identity, how they influence socio-political relations, relate to established ideas of Zuluness and contribute to wider debates around identity politics in KwaZulu-Natal.

This study aims to contribute to the growing body of work that focuses on archives as subjects of study in their own right. Fairly extensive and ongoing work has been carried out on how archives might be re-read and re-configured to facilitate new understandings about the past, the multitude forms they might take and the range of methods that facilitate critical engagement with archival records (Hamilton *et al*, 2002). For example, “reading against the grain” of existing archives is an approach that entails the extraction, mainly by experienced historians aware of the bias of any archive, of information about the past (Hamilton, 2011: 319). “Reading along the grain” of an archive offers an ethnographic approach that seeks to facilitate a better interpretation of archives by foregrounding the record-keeping practices and conventions of the time during which they were constituted and interrogating the complex conditions of production and preservation under which historical materials become part of an archive (Stoler, 2009). Critical interventions into understandings of archives also press us to move beyond formal archives as repositories and to imagine archival elements present in a multitude of fixed and fluid forms (Comaroff, 1978; Hofmeyr, 1994; Hamilton, 2002; Harris, 2012).

However, questions of the custodianship of materials found in locations that are not conventionally considered archival have hardly been considered. Through the lens of custodianship, this thesis offers new insights into the way in which materials relating to the past are preserved and managed in one place in post-apartheid South Africa. It facilitates a more complex probing and understanding of custodianship and the place and power of archives. The thesis also contributes to a fuller understanding of contemporary identity politics in KwaZulu-Natal by showing how, in some cases, claims to custodianship of the past in Umbumbulu serve as a vehicle for claims to identities long subsumed under a broad and generic notion of Zuluness.

### **Umbumbulu – A Brief History**

Umbumbulu is a peri-urban zone located approximately 45 kilometres southwest of Durban in south-eastern KwaZulu-Natal. It is made up of 25 districts with nine traditional leaders administering their respective Traditional Authority Areas. An historical overview of this area brings to light some of the past interactions between the different inhabitants of Umbumbulu and the ways in which the past has been utilised for political aims and in order to gain access to resources. That is not to say that engagements with the past in the area have only been political. Cultural practices, which include ceremonies, celebrations and communing with the ancestors, function as an important link with the past and one that is also experienced at a personal and spiritual level.

The area that is today called Umbumbulu was on the periphery of the Zulu kingdom during the reign of its first king, Shaka, in the early nineteenth century. At that time,

chiefdoms in these south-eastern regions were distanced from central Zulu power, referred to collectively and derogatorily by the Zulu elite as the “amaLala”, and were exploited economically and politically (Hamilton and Wright, 1990). During the reigns of kings Shaka and Dingane, expansionism and conflict within the Zulu kingdom led many people to migrate into the wider Port Natal area, as Durban was then known. In 1840, when a grouping that consisted predominantly of people identified as Makhanyas arrived in what is now Umbumbulu, they found much of the area occupied by the abaMbo<sup>5</sup> (Mkhize) people, also immigrants from the north.

From 1846 onwards, this area and others to the south of the Thukela River were subject to colonial administration and reorganisation. In 1847, Theophilus Shepstone, the Diplomatic Agent to the Native Tribes, placed large numbers of refugees from the Zulu kingdom in ‘reserves’ in the new colony (Reader, 1966: 16, 23 – 28). Missionaries also made increasingly efforts to exert their influence on local populations. The first American Board missionaries, who had arrived in South Africa in 1835, had built and a mission station at Amanzimtoti, near Umbumbulu. In 1853, the American Board established Adams College, then known as Amanzimtoti Institute, on the outskirts of Umbumbulu. It was one of the first African schools to introduce co-education, to teach mathematics and science to Africans, to provide matriculation and post-matriculation courses, and to give responsible posts to Africans (Du Rand, 1990). The new colonial reserves entailed the drawing of loose boundaries around clusters of people and were left largely undefined for

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<sup>5</sup> The terms “Mkhize” and “abaMbo” and the root, “Mbo”, are used interchangeably throughout the thesis. As Sithole (1997: 78) writes, “‘Mkhize’ is used for the numerous Mkhize chieftaincies which emerged when the Mkhize reached southern Natal after fleeing from Dingane’s armies during the 1830s. ‘abaMbo’ is the *isithakazelo* (form of polite address) for the Mkhize.” “Embo” is a locative and denotes the place of the abaMbo or Mkhize.

many years. A number of the new inhabitants were not living under hereditary chiefs. Shepstone attached individuals and fragments of chiefdoms to existing chiefs and in some cases created artificial chiefdoms where he installed his trusted African assistants in positions of authority (Etherington, 1989: 171 – 174). In the Umbumbulu area, Shepstone installed chiefs of the Cele and Luthuli groupings, which further diversified an already mixed area. That is not to say that these chiefs were complete outsiders and had no claim to chieftainship before Shepstone's intervention. The Cele had previously established themselves on many parts of the south coast and held long-standing claims to chieftainship, as did the Luthuli in the area now known as the Bluff, closer to central Durban (Bryant, 1929: 500 – 503 and 538 – 544). Shepstone employed a form of indirect rule that relied on a good working knowledge of 'native' society, local knowledge and political systems to develop an understanding of traditional authority and governance, and how these could be harnessed to control African communities indirectly through the power of the chiefs (Hamilton, 1998). The segregationist and later apartheid states, in turn, selectively reinforced certain aspects of tradition, custom and chiefly authority, and rejected others, in their efforts to organise and rule over the area.

In many respects, Umbumbulu has a history comparable to those of a number of the peri-urban areas and semi-rural areas that lie on the periphery of the city of Durban. In the early part of the twentieth century, the emergence of the "Durban System" of African administration, which acted as a forerunner to the apartheid state's model of urban regulation, sought to control black urbanisation by requiring Africans to have permits to



enter Durban's city centre (Maylam, 1995).<sup>6</sup> At a more local level, Umbumbulu had its own set of politics related to tradition, land and chiefly succession. The 1920s and 1930s were a period of considerable unrest in the area due to various instances of land conflicts, mainly involving the Mkhizes. The first of these was a boundary dispute, which erupted between inhabitants of part of Umbumbulu and the predominantly white, neighbouring commercial farmers. The Native Affairs Department's handling of this dispute brought together a long-simmering succession dispute within the Mkhize chieftaincy and competition over scarce land resources. Later conflicts stemmed from the Native Affairs Department's attempts to carve out separate chiefdoms for chiefs Thimuni and Nkasa, the key claimants to the Mkhize chieftaincy during the 1930s. Opposition from their followers resulted in violent outbreaks that included 600 reported hut burnings and 22 deaths (Sithole, 1997).<sup>7</sup>

A boom in industry in Durban during the 1930s and 1940s led to the growth of a more permanent urban population and informal settlements within and near the urban areas of the city.<sup>8</sup> With the establishment of the national Group Areas Act in 1950, residential segregation in the city became increasingly entrenched, resulting in the forced removal of many non-white residents to townships that had been established on the city's outskirts (Maylam, 1995). The introduction of the Bantu Authorities Act in 1951 created the legal basis for the deportation of black Africans into designated 'homeland reserve areas' or

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<sup>6</sup> For a detailed account of the Durban system, see Swanson (1976). The policy was not only concerned with race and European cultural hegemony but also about black labour, economic development and how to control these. For more on the economic aspects of the policy, see Freund (2002).

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed discussion of these events, see Sithole (1992) and Sithole (1998).

<sup>8</sup> For more on the development of townships around Durban, see Torr (1995), Swanson (1995) and Hughes (1995).

bantustans, which Mathis argues, “provided what is widely perceived as the major shift towards an ethnic rather than a racial policy of control over the African population.” (Mathis, 2008: 58) The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act (1959) later allowed for the transformation of the reserves into fully-fledged independent bantustans, divided along ethnic lines.

In the 1950s, Umbumbulu, other former colonial reserves south of the Thukela River, and the remnants of the old Zulu Kingdom were divided into Tribal and Regional Authorities and in 1970, a single Zulu Territorial Authority (the later bantustan of KwaZulu) was established, into which Umbumbulu was incorporated. From the 1970s, in the semi-autonomous bantustan of KwaZulu, the Zulu nationalist organisation, Inkatha, was able to shape and utilise broad ideas about Zulu tradition and identity that lent significant power to chiefs, as well as governance based on tradition and custom. As part of KwaZulu, of which Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the leader of Inkatha, was also the Chief Minister, Umbumbulu was subject to Inkatha propaganda and a politicised, traditionalist notion of Zuluness (Harries, 1993: 110 – 113). Maylam (1995: 24 – 25) estimates that between 1973 and 1988, the population of Durban more than trebled, with almost half this number living in the KwaZulu bantustan, in the outlying regions of greater Durban, and therefore under an authority that favoured tradition, custom and chiefly structures as a mode of governance.

In the mid-1980s, Umbumbulu was wracked by local disputes predominantly between Mkhize and Makhanya groupings but with a complex array of allegiances. Local

explanations for the cause of the conflict are varied and vague, and include competition over land, fighting amongst chiefs and revenge for killings that occurred a long time before. Fighting between the two groupings continued for just under two years, beginning and ending with major battles and involving sustained smaller-scale fighting in the intermediate period (Mathis, 2008).<sup>9</sup> While both of these groupings held historically ambiguous positions in relation to Zulu nationalist ideologies, supporting certain aspects at particular times, and distancing themselves from these on other occasions, their localised dispute was further crosscut by the broader conflict between members of Inkatha and the United Democratic Front (UDF) / ANC, which played itself out in Umbumbulu, as in other peri-urban areas around Durban and beyond, in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Umbumbulu thus has a long history of complex relations with central Zulu authority, rooted in an early historical alienation from centralised Zulu power and more recently in relation to contemporary expressions of Zulu nationalism.

Since 1994, the ANC government has actively engaged with tradition and custom in KwaZulu-Natal and as a result, the position of chiefs, or traditional leaders<sup>10</sup> has been ambiguous, as has their authority over tradition and custom. While a policy of cooperative governance between traditional leaders and the eThekweni Municipality in Durban was initiated in the early 2000s, there has existed a struggle over political authority in the former bantustan areas that are now located within the municipal boundaries (Beall and Ngonyama, 2009; Beall, 2006). This is linked to a struggle over the

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<sup>9</sup> For a detailed account of the violence in Umbumbulu during this period, see Chapter 3 of Mathis (2008).

<sup>10</sup> Terms like traditional leaders, traditional authorities and chiefs are contentious and are the focus of contemporary public debate. Bearing this in mind, I use the Zulu terms *inkosi* (chief) and *amakhosi* (chiefs) as well as the English terms chief/s and traditional leader/s as they were used by the various subjects of my study, including government officials, local custodians of the past, and incumbents of these positions.

custodianship of adaptable bodies of tradition and custom, the stewards of which have been chiefs, acknowledged by both the colonial and apartheid governments, and who have historically determined access to resources for those under chiefly rule in what is now KwaZulu-Natal. In the post-apartheid context, the eThekweni Municipality has tried to define tradition and custom for a wider constituency through a variety of initiatives including the Ulwazi Programme. By doing so, it is positioning itself as a custodian of far-reaching and inclusive categories of historical materials including 'heritage' and 'indigenous knowledge', which overlap greatly with tradition and custom. The competition over political authority and access to resources in the present therefore includes a struggle over the definition and custodianship of tradition, custom and other bodies of knowledge of the past, which were largely monopolised by Inkatha during apartheid times. This is not limited to interactions between traditional leaders and the municipality. As we will see in the forthcoming chapters, through claims to custodianship and the marshaling of materials relating to the past, the other subjects of my study also strive to shape and lay claim to the past and are aware of the potential to gain access to resources like state funding and land.

### **Situating the Study**

This study looks beyond the documentary record and institutions officially recognised as archives in order to explore other ways and locations in which the record of the past is being dealt with. The types of interventions discussed are central to understanding and analysing the manifold ways in which the past is being dealt with in contemporary Umbumbulu, where materials located in unofficial settings are deemed worthy of

protection and preservation, and claims to custodianship over them are being made. These claims to custodianship in turn have a bearing on contemporary identity politics in KwaZulu-Natal, long-dominated by generic ideas of Zuluness, reinforced by the perceived custodianship of Zulu cultural symbols, tradition and custom by the Zulu monarchy and traditional leaders.

### *Custodianship and Power*

In his book, *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida (1994: 1 – 3) interrogates the idea of the archive. He foregrounds the part that archives play in relation to power, not only as an institution but through those who are involved in the process of archiving, the custodians or archivists, who bring to bear on them their own histories, perspectives and desires, as well as a multitude of external and unknown forces that come into play. In his discussion of the archive as an institution in its original Greek context, Derrida argues that the word archive denoted both the principle of commencement, the point at which the record was first constituted, at which memory was consigned to the archive, and the principle of commandment, the power of consignation, by which authority and social order were exercised. Those who controlled the process of consignation were the archons, the guardians or custodians of the archive, who “held and signified political power [and] were considered to possess the right to make or represent the law” (2). Given their authority, the archons determined what comprised the archive by deciding which texts and materials were consigned to it. Control of consignation, the exertion of “archontic power” and the act of custodianship are therefore at the centre of political power. It is important not to conflate the two actions of record-making and consignation. Separate

from record-making, the key aspect of consignment is the act of delivering or depositing materials, of sending them away to an archival repository, out of public circulation and with limited access. While for Derrida, consignment is a defined archival process, this thesis will show that in present-day KwaZulu-Natal, consignment is a far more multiple, tenuous, volatile and contested process.

Harris has written extensively on archives in South Africa during apartheid and in the post-apartheid period (Harris, 2007; Hamilton, Harris and Hatang, 2011). His earlier writings (Harris, 2007; Harris 1996) were centred on archives as an institution of the state used to support government operations and to secure and maintain political power by restricting access to records. He gives details of the “obsessive guarding, patrolling, and manipulating of consignment by apartheid’s archons”, including media censorship, official secrets hidden under various pieces of legislation, and South Africa’s memory institutions, which “legitimized apartheid by their silences and their narratives of power” (2007: 43). In his book, *Archives and Justice* (2007), he incorporates various theoretical aspects into his writing, predominantly engaging with Derrida’s discourse on deconstruction and challenging positivist and reductionist ideas about ordering and understanding the past. Following Derrida, he highlights the power that is inherent in record-making and resists the notion of archive as a static, defined and closed entity. He calls for the opening up of archives, for them to be continually shifting and hospitable to multiple perspectives and different forms. For both Derrida and Harris, questions of archives and the discursive nature of recording and representation are linked to political power and dominant ideologies – the place of the archive and the custodial is the place of

power, of government. This literature is important in understanding the intimate relationship between custodianship, control of archives and political power, and how my study, in which some claims to custodianship of the past emanate from positions of marginality and not centres of power, has a bearing on and moderates established ideas around archives and custodianship.

### *Re-thinking the Place of the Archive*

In both popular and professional discourses, archives are commonly associated with ideas of stability and evidence, and in a physical sense, as edifices in which records are housed and preserved. Increasingly, critical interventions into the conceptualisation of what constitutes archives have challenged existing ideas about the documentary record and officially recognised institutions in order to explore other forms and sites in which archival work is being carried out. *Refiguring the Archive* (2002) presents a multidisciplinary critique of the inherited archive and the scope and possibilities of archives of the future. The focus is distinctly southern African and offers new perspectives aimed at disrupting and re-conceptualising notions of archives. This includes recognition of stable and fluid forms and practices on the periphery of the formal archival field, which may or may not feature archival elements but which shift the nature of the field itself (Hamilton, 2002). Carolyn Hamilton (2011: 331 – 333) further explores the instability of what are generally perceived as static, formal archives, arguing that by applying a biographical lens to archives we can “discern motion, process and change in and around archives and records at the same time as archival processes and procedures work to preserve the record for posterity.” This type of work prompts us to think beyond

archives as (predominantly physical) repositories and raises questions about what we might consider archival and what the place of archives might be.

In a recent essay, “Genres of the trace: memory, archives and trouble”, Harris (2012: 150 – 151) also offers new insights into what he considers archival. He presents his understanding of archives as defined by three fundamental attributes or movements: one, a trace on, or in, a surface; two, a surface with the quality of exteriority, and three, following Hamilton, an act of deeming such a trace to be worthy of protection. Harris gives the examples of how everyday instructional notes collected by Nelson Mandela’s prison warder, an edited video on Facebook and the tattoo of an image that came to him in a dream, have all been deemed worthy of protection and all constitute a trace on a surface with the quality of exteriority. He maintains that deeming “posits an intervention almost without apparatus and certainly without professional or disciplinary authority. Anyone can deem.” The fact that anyone can determine what is worthy of protection and preservation, in effect, what is worthy of entering into an archive, has critical implications for the place of archives, the archons as custodians of them, as well as their exertion of archontic power and control over consignment. This literature is useful as it helps us to re-imagine the place, form and contents of an archive and of who might exert custodianship over it. It positions us better to understand and analyse how those, like many of the subjects of my study, operating on the periphery of power in unofficial loci that are not normally considered to be archival, might deem something worthy of preservation and protection, and how this moderates established notions of archives and practices of custodianship.



### *Vernacular Modernities*

The materials of tradition and custom with which this thesis is mainly concerned are usually counterposed to the idea of modernity. My study presents a challenge to this binary and others. Its subjects mobilise the past in a variety of ways, across multiple channels and media, resisting easy dichotomies. Rather, I find that ‘vernacular modernity’ is a more productive framework in which to understand them and their activities. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to trace the evolution of the term modernity and how it has been theorised at different times and in changing contexts. Most typically, modernity is associated with the advancement of society through scientific and industrial progress, based on evidence and rationality, and by a desire to question, know, order and categorise the world. Dilip Gaonkar, one of the foremost thinkers on alternative modes of modernity, offers a synthesis of various theories and different schools of thought on modernity, ultimately stating that it might best be understood as “an attitude of questioning the present” (Gaonkar, 2001: 13). He goes on to explain that there are multiple sites and multiple ways in which people continually question the present and “give themselves an identity and a destiny” (16). Far from a universalistic grammar and simple dichotomies that characterised earlier forms of modernity and ways of knowing the world, this type of thinking points to a modernity that “is not one but many” and is “incomplete and necessarily so.” (18)

In a more recent engagement with questions of modernity in Africa, Comaroff and Comaroff (2012: 9 – 12) argue that modernity in Africa is not merely a copy of the Euro-American “original”. Rather, they call for Afromodernity to be apprehended and

addressed in its own right. They maintain that African modernity has always had its own trajectories and yielded diverse yet distinctive means with which to make sense of the world and to act upon it. The authors posit the idea of a vernacular modernity rather than an *alternative* to Euro-American modernity, one that is geopolitically situated and continually unfolding in the present. They suggest that modernity, and its multiple meanings, are derived from their context of use and that people fashion their own versions of what they understand to be modern.

In a similar vein, but with a focus on South Africa, Ran Greenstein draws on the work of Frederick Cooper and James Ferguson to argue for modernity as an ongoing, plural and multiple process that incorporates many possible modernities. He maintains that modernity is a concept that has been adopted by people in order to convey their local understandings, experiences and aspirations in the context of global development and relations. Rather than withdrawing from these relations by, for example, advancing alternative 'indigenous' or 'traditional' knowledges, people at a local level seek to reshape them, using the broad array of media, channels of communication and networks at their disposal. Greenstein suggests that these new types of knowledge, based on local understanding and experience are "spaces for destabilizing dominant modes of knowing" and have a bearing on shaping socio-political relations (Greenstein, 2009: 71 – 73). This type of thinking is productive in relation to what I have encountered in Umbumbulu. As we will see in the coming chapters, the subjects of my study do indeed "question the present". They seek to be part of the modern rather than asserting a particular 'indigenous' or 'traditional' mode and mobilise the past in the present using a variety of

networks and media. They work across local, provincial and national networks, making claims on the past through manuscripts, published books, the Internet, oral forms of history and the complex array of things contained within notions of tradition and custom. Their activities are not easy to classify and stable categories do not emerge in the way in which they deal with and mobilise the past. Rather, as I argue in the thesis, the multiple custodial forms and linked productive interventions I encountered in my fieldwork, and the kinds of knowledge that flow from them, based on local understandings and experience, shape socio-political relations and challenge established modes of knowing with regard to archives, custodianship and identity in KwaZulu-Natal.

*Custodianship, the production of history and curation of the past*

The thesis reveals an unclear distinction between practices of custodianship or record-keeping, often associated with archives and the purportedly neutral preservation and care of sources of historical information, and the production of versions of history, a more active endeavour. Conventional historiography distinguishes between history producers, predominantly academic historians, but also community and other amateur historians, and sources of historical information, commonly contained in archives. Important interventions such as David William Cohen's 1994 study, *The Combing Of History*, make us aware that much of what is viewed as sources are often productions of versions of history in their own right. For Cohen, the production of history is an ongoing process in which meanings shift as histories are contested and re-interpreted, while some voices are silenced and others are privileged (4).

By unsettling the conventional sites, genres and producers of history found in academic historiography and challenging distinctions between sources and versions of history, and between professional historians and everyday producers of history, we can conceive of multiple locations of historical knowledge in or pertaining to Umbumbulu. This allows us to consider various official and unofficial sites “where different histories in a range of genres are produced, circulated and contested” (Witz and Rassool, 2008: 10). As we will see in the thesis, various, and at times conflicting, forms and versions of history are produced in a variety of ways in different social contexts and by a multiplicity of authors, and clear distinctions between sources of historical information and produced histories are often blurred. While Cohen’s insights were generated by bringing together so-called sources and the production of history, this study brings into a single frame custodianship of the past and the production of versions of history.

The process of archiving has traditionally been imagined as one that collects records of the past for preservation in a neutral repository. History writing, on the other hand, is conceived of as a secondary, more creative process in which historians use archives and other records as sources in order to reconstruct, narrate or produce a particular version of the past. As such, archives as formal institutions are often thought of as stores of the past and their supposedly neutral custodians, archivists, are distinguished from historians who engage actively in the writing of history. A reconsideration of this terminology raises important questions about the perceived and actual boundary between these activities. To what extent are custodial and preservatory impulses intertwined with the public

presentation of a particular history? And to what degree is a productive urge apparent in a preservatory configuration of records of the past?

To begin thinking differently about these concepts, it is useful to revisit their definitions. The Oxford English Dictionary (2013) defines a custodian as “one who has the custody of a thing or person; a guardian, keeper” while the definition of a production is “a thing produced as a result of an action, process, or effort”. A comparison of these terms suggests that while a custodian is a guardian or keeper of something already constituted, a production relates to something that is actively generated or created by the producer. This has resonance with the roots of archival practice in ideas about the ‘archon’, the one who keeps, or guards evidence but does not construct, mediate, engage or narrate it. The archon upholds the official, authorised record, resists calls to question or subvert the record, and is, in essence, a supposedly impartial gatekeeper (Harris, 2007: 123). In drawing attention to these aspects and the way in which the terms custodian, archivist and archon are generally understood, I am not endorsing the notion that custodians are neutral entities without agency. It is now widely accepted, in archival circles at least, that archivists are, in fact, active shapers of social memory and that inheritances (of records or histories) are not received neatly assembled but rather made and remade (Harris, 1996). Any act of inclusion presumes or demands, an act of exclusion and any assembly results in dispersion and continued, different re-assembling (Hamilton, Harris and Hatang, 2011).

Custodians are therefore interpreters, narrators and producers in their own right and not just recipients of an inheritance that must be preserved for future generations. Harris, who has done much to unravel the notion of archives as neutral repositories and archivists as impartial custodians, provides a simple yet effective example of the way in which archivists are simultaneously custodial and complicit in the construction of record, through their work of appraisal:

[the record] comes within the purview of the archival appraiser bearing many layers of intervention and interpretation. Take the example of a government file. It has many authors, formal and informal; annotators; and managers, who classify, cross-reference, mis-file, remove, lose, shred etc. The file, indeed any record, is a complex construction of process. And in appraisal we add another very substantial layer of construction. (2007: 102)

The analysis that I present in the thesis, particularly in the case of one of the custodians on whom I focus, Siyabonga Mkhize, leads me to suggest that the conventional historiographical distinction between the custodianship of sources and the production of versions of history is, still more obscure than to be found in Harris's work. In the thesis, I discuss instances in which custodianship of the past is being actively claimed and history produced in Umbumbulu in order to fully explicate the close relationship between these conventionally distinctive concepts.

My point of entry into understanding issues of custodianship of the past in Umbumbulu was the Ulwazi Programme and I focus on its claims to custodianship in more detail in Chapter Two. The Programme Leader maintained that due to factors like urban migration and death through AIDS in the communities in which the programme functions, the chains of transmission of cultural traditions, indigenous knowledge and heritage were

broken. The onus was therefore on the Ulwazi Programme and eThekweni Municipality to act as a custodian and preserver. The programme is formally archival in nature and its proponents consider it a custodian of what it terms indigenous knowledge, though, as I shall show, it also exhibits productive tendencies. Looking beyond the programme, I encountered various other situations in which the past was being dealt with in interesting ways, including ones involving traditional leaders, discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, who exhibited both custodial and productive tendencies. The work of local historian, Siyabonga Mkhize, as we will see in Chapter Four, often straddled the custodial and the productive, inviting a re-evaluation, or at least a muddying of the line between custodianship and the production of a version of history. I found that, most obviously in the history he produced, there was also a custodial inflection, one that he himself acknowledged. Therefore, while Harris argues that archives produce the past, it could similarly be argued that Siyabonga Mkhize's production of history, archives the past. Likewise, the practices and output of unpublished author, Desmond Makhanya, discussed in Chapter Five, similarly unsettled clearly defined boundaries between the custody of records and the production of a synthesised history.

The thesis proposes that this blurring is an important move in asserting historical claims and marshalling historical materials from positions of marginality. In post-apartheid South Africa access to key resources such as land or office as a traditional leader largely depends on participating in governmental procedures like commissions and land claims processes, which are concerned with 'evidence'. While the commission of the land restitution process, for example, takes seriously land claims based on tradition and

custom, it does so in a way that is nonetheless reliant on the presentation of evidence. Therefore, those asserting historical claims are cognisant of the need to present documentary records as a concrete form of evidence with which to back up their claims. This became all the more apparent to me when one of librarians at the Killie Campbell Africana Library<sup>11</sup> showed me two folders bursting with documents, which contained evidence for a land claim.

Rather than guardians of materials or authors of definitive histories, the thesis argues that the subjects of this research might be best described as curators of the past. I was introduced to the idea of curation through discussions with members of the Archive and Public Culture Initiative, a transdisciplinary space in which, throughout the period of my research, I interacted with, amongst others, museologists and fine artists. These researchers brought with them discipline-specific perspectives and concepts like curation, which I appropriated as it helped me to make sense of, and analyse, what I had encountered during the period of my fieldwork. Curation incorporates the preservatory aspects of custodianship and the productive aspects involved in the public display of a particular history, both of which were apparent in the activities of the subjects of my research. The dictionary definition of curate refers to two related but distinct actions. The first is “to look after and preserve” – a custodial tendency, a preservatory impulse. The second action is to “select, organise and present” – the practice of exhibition (Oxford

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<sup>11</sup> The Killie Campbell Library’s manuscripts collection is considered an important source on the early history of contact between the Nguni-speaking people of the KwaZulu-Natal region and the British colonists, and a key resource on the pre-colonial history of KwaZulu-Natal. It was often used to strengthen and validate claims for traditional leadership submitted to the Commission on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims, also known as the Nhlapo Commission and houses collection such as the nineteenth century James Stuart Papers. The latter has been published in five volumes as Webb, C. B. de and Wright, J.B. Eds. 1976 – 2001. 5 Vols. *The James Stuart Archive of Recorded Oral Evidence Relating to the History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Peoples*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.



English Dictionary, 2013). Therefore, curation involves both custody and the making of meaning through the ordering and exhibition, or public presentation, of materials. Katleho Shoro (2014: 26), following Carolyn Hamilton and Pippa Skotnes, writes that the word curator comes from the Latin “curare”, which means “to [take] care”, and could be translated as “caretaker”. The term came to be associated with specialists who took custodianship and care of artifacts such as artworks and historic and scientific objects, collected by, and stored in, institutions like museums, libraries and archives.

However, a second aspect of the role of the “curator as author” should not be overlooked. Hemmings *et al* (1997: 155) write that during the process of curation the “sorting and the classifying of the material is done with an eye to the story that can be told”. Similarly, Costis Dallas (1997) maintains that the motive for the curation of exhibitions is to tell these “stories” and the narratives embedded in the content, structure and visual-spatial rhetoric of an exhibition serve as an important vehicle of meaning production. As Shoro (2014: 27), citing Groys (2008) and Gioni (2011), argues, works within exhibitions do not speak for themselves. Rather, the curator speaks through the curated materials, performing an interpretative or even editorial role.

The ability to create narratives rests on the authority of the curator. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2000: 21) documents how order and meaning in museum exhibitions are created “by giving authority to certain texts, figures, ideas, problems, discursive strategies and historical narratives.” Indeed, Carolyn Hamilton and Pippa Skotnes (2013: 23) argue that while curation invokes notions of care in “managing or mobilising items within

forms of custody”, it is also an exercise in authority and power. Curation is thus a practice that commonly entails the care and preservation of materials, as well as expressions of authority and power in the selective organisation and presentation, or authoring, of a particular version of the past. As we will see in the forthcoming chapters, many of the subjects of my research exhibit clear signs of curatorial activity, caring for and preserving historical materials but also actively selecting, organising and presenting these materials in a particular way to achieve certain aims.

The thesis considers how the activities of those making historical claims play out in everyday life in Umbumbulu and what the implications of this are in the wider context of identity politics in present-day KwaZulu-Natal. While the Zulu royal house aims to maintain its historic monopoly and custodianship of generic ‘Zulu’ traditions and customs (a source of much of its power), the study exposes marginalised cultural movements calling for the recognition of pre-Zulu customs, traditions and identities, as well as work being done on the legacy of missionary activity in the region. These activities serve to unpick established notions of Zuluness and offer insight into how questions around identity intersect with the mobilisation of the past in contemporary KwaZulu-Natal.

### *Debating Zuluness*

A significant amount of academic work has been generated on Zuluness, identity and the ways in which the past in what is now the KwaZulu-Natal region has been produced and mobilised for political ends. Zuluness, or views of what made and continues to make Zuluness, captures the “shared narratives, hybrid expressions and contradictory

meanings” that different actors espouse or discard over time (Carton, 2008: 4). Rather than a single definition of Zuluness, this study acknowledges that the term has been constructed and changed over time, and encompasses competing views, held and mobilised by a variety of players for different reasons at various periods in the history of the region that is now KwaZulu-Natal.

This work identifies two broad periods of Zulu nationalism. The first saw the emergence of a Zulu ethnic consciousness in the first quarter of the twentieth century and the second the consolidation of modern Zulu nationalism and its promotion by the Inkatha movement in the period from the 1970s to the 1990s. John Wright (2008), Patrick Harries (1993) and Shula Marks (1986), amongst others, have shown how in contrast to the conventional view of a fixed and primordial Zulu identity, traceable to the time of the Zulu kingdom in the early nineteenth century, a generic Zulu ethnic identity was a phenomenon of the early twentieth century, linked to a complicated mix of Zulu royalist sentiment, white segregationist intention, migrant labour and the economic, social and political aspirations of the Zulu petite bourgeoisie, commonly known as *amakholwa*.

Chiefs were incorporated into the system of indirect rule (and the later bantustans) and, alongside the Zulu royal house, looked to an historic Zulu identity to support their status and political authority. The black petite bourgeoisie sought to attract a mass following in attempts to defend their rights to vote and buy land and were increasingly active in propagating the ideology of a shared past, focussing on the figure of Solomon, the most senior member of the Zulu royal house, and the Zulu language, as traditional symbols that

bound Zulu-speakers in a new and expanded political state. Much of this new ethnic identity was purposefully socially engineered. The Inkatha kaZulu, the Zulu National Congress, was formed in 1924 and a Zulu Society that promoted the Zulu language, literature and folklore was established in 1937 (Harries, 1993: 112). That is not to say that Zulu ethnic consciousness during this period was solely the product of state officials, chiefs and *amakholwa*. Mahoney (2012) highlights the role of migrant labour in the spread of Zulu ethnicity. Whereas workers in the colony of Natal associated themselves with districts and chiefdoms from which they originated, Mahoney argues that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, migrant labourers from Natal and Zululand working in Johannesburg began to identify themselves collectively as 'Zulus'. He maintains that young, male migrant labourers returning to Natal from Johannesburg brought with them and spread a new Zulu ethnic consciousness that was constructed spontaneously and collectively "from below" (150). Therefore, within the broader political processes of the emergence of Zulu nationalism and of affirming a generic Zulu ethnic identity, there existed much variability. A number of studies have focussed on the fluidity and complexity of social, religious and political interactions, often times utilising biographical foci to explicate individual positions and perspectives in relation to wider political motives (La Hausse, 2000; Mokoena, 2011; Hughes, 2011).

The promotion of a politicised Zulu ethnic identity was the foundation for the second Zulu nationalist movement in the 1970s, in the form of Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha. A considerable amount of research on this subject highlights Inkatha's promotion of a homogenous and traditionalist notion of Zuluness, which served the movement's political

aims. Some studies, like Maré and Hamilton's *An Appetite for Power* (1987), focussed on the organisational aspects of Inkatha, including its origins, structure and inner workings and its manipulation of the past. This study also considered its close association with the apartheid state and its political and economic strategies in response to changing political pressures. Maré's later book, *Brothers Born of Warrior Blood: Ethnicity and Politics in South Africa* (1992), focussed on the more theoretical aspects of politicised ethnicity, using Inkatha as a case study to expose the ways in which Mangosuthu Buthelezi employed a particular version of history to advance Inkatha ideology and maintain political power.

Other studies concentrated more squarely on Buthelezi's manipulation of the past, looking at the ways in which inhabitants of the KwaZulu bantustan were subject to Inkatha propaganda and a politicised, generic notion of Zulu identity, promoted through, for example, Buthelezi's speeches, textbooks in the KwaZulu school system, celebrations such as King Shaka Day and the use and manipulation of Zulu cultural symbols (Golan, 1991; Harries, 1993; Klopper, 1996). This propaganda was extended to formal memory institutions, as is evident in John Wright and Aaron Mazel's enquiry into the state of museums in the former province of Natal and bantustan of KwaZulu (Wright and Mazel, 1991). Key to Buthelezi's utilisation of the Zulu past was the creation of links between the greatness of the nineteenth-century Zulu kingdom and its first ruler, Shaka, and the portrayal of the KwaZulu bantustan as the historical successor to this pre-colonial kingdom. This was angled to legitimate Buthelezi's position by making tangible and

visible a continuity of leadership that connected him to former leaders of the Zulu (Harries, 1993; Forsyth, 1992).

During the mid-1990s, the transitional politics of the former province of Natal, and after 1994, the newly-constituted KwaZulu-Natal, were characterised by a struggle for control over cultural symbols. Sandra Klopper (1996) has shown how in the lead up to South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, the ANC and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), as Inkatha was renamed after 1990, fought an intense battle for control over the meaning and ownership of cultural symbols, including traditional dress and the Zulu king as a symbol of Zulu unity. The ANC was determined to reclaim the history of Zulu speakers for a broad and democratic alliance while the IFP attempted to rally a Zulu ethnic constituency in the interest of retaining its regional power-base in KwaZulu-Natal. Similarly, Ineke Kessel and Barbara Oomen (1997) have argued that in order to contest Inkatha's claims to the sole guardianship of Zulu tradition, the ANC in 1992 made a conscious decision to enter the political arena in Natal on Inkatha's terms, in an attempt to 'out-Zulu' its rival.<sup>12</sup> The battle for political power in the province was, and in many instances, continues to be, a contest for custodianship over symbols presented as a cultural inheritance.

A more recent engagement with questions of Zuluness is Carton *et al's* *Zulu Identities: Being Zulu Past and Present* (2008). This volume offers multidisciplinary perspectives on a variety of aspects of historical and contemporary forms of Zuluness, including the

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<sup>12</sup> For more on Inkatha and how its promotion of Zulu ethnic nationalism were a result of political strategies that evolved due to competition with the ANC and its allies, see Piper (2002).

foundations of Zuluness, Shaka's legacy, gender, twentieth century Zulu nationalism as well as music, dress, material culture and further postulations on the future of Zuluness. In the preface section, one of the editors, Jabulani Sithole, points to a deepened interest in contemporary ideas of Zuluness alongside "fresh political tensions", stimulated, in part, by the Nhlapo Commission (Sithole, 2008: xv – xvi). Mbongiseni Buthelezi's recent doctoral thesis also reveals some of the ways in which the past is being mobilised in KwaZulu-Natal in a changed political climate. It points to a growing opposition to a generic notion of Zuluness and a desire for a more nuanced view of the past and of the histories of those that have long been subsumed within the category 'Zulu'. Mbongiseni Buthelezi (2012) examines the efforts of people who trace their history to the Ndwandwe kingdom, which was destroyed by Shaka's Zulu forces in the 1820s, to engage with questions of identity and meanings of the past by mobilising oral artistic forms in subtle ways to overturn the dominance in public perception of the former Zulu king, Shaka, a renowned symbol of Zuluness. Using ethnographic sketches of young Zulu South Africans, White (2012: 420 – 423) writes about a radically new composition of ethnic attachment. He offers details of Bongani who vehemently renounced the label 'Zulu', stating: "I'm not a Zulu...I live in KwaZulu, speak isiZulu, but I'm not a Zulu: I'm a Gumedede." White's interpretation of Bongani's refusal of Zuluness (and similar sentiments expressed by others) is that it suggests a new, personal mode of ethnic identification, one that is centred on "a plurality of parallel private spheres of right" instead of on chiefly institutions of traditional authority that have previously given public representation to Zuluness.

The body of literature on Zulu identity is relevant to this study as it offers an historical overview of the ways in which politicised notions of Zuluness and claims to custodianship over Zulu cultural symbols, tradition and custom have been mobilised at different times during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries by the Zulu petite bourgeoisie, Inkatha, traditional leaders, the ANC and Jacob Zuma in order to secure and maintain political power in the region. It reveals how Zuluness continues to be a workable category in contemporary public discourse but also how custodianship of the past, including of tradition and custom, is an important but contested political activity. Through the lens of custodianship, this study contributes new insights to ongoing debates around Zuluness by examining the mobilisation of historical claims and materials by marginalised groupings, traditional leaders and government, and how these play out in terms of contemporary identity politics in KwaZulu-Natal. The study reveals forms of curation of the past that deal with the same kinds of marginalised groupings and identities that are evident in other contemporary research on identity in KwaZulu-Natal (Buthelezi, 2012 and White, 2012).

### **Seeking out custodianship and locating the field**

I was drawn to the Ulwazi Programme because, using social technologies, it presented a seemingly democratised, grassroots approach to the production and preservation of local histories and culture. Umbumbulu as a field site was dictated, in part, by the Ulwazi Programme as it was one of the areas where the project was most established. However, further reading into the history of the area revealed the wider Umbumbulu region's prolonged and complicated relationship with central Zulu authority, which suggested that



contemporary archival efforts in the Umbumbulu would yield rich material about the ways in which the past was being dealt with in the area and how this might relate to ideas about identity. My fieldwork took place over a period of about two-and-a-half years from May 2009 until the end of 2011 and comprised a number of intermittent research trips. Examination of the Ulwazi Programme Wiki,<sup>13</sup> hereafter the Ulwazi Wiki, continued until the end of January 2012. The thesis is written in both the past and present tense. When I refer to interviews, discussions and events that occurred during the period of my fieldwork, I write about them in the past tense. However, when I refer to aspects of my research, like the continuing operation of the Ulwazi Programme, that were ongoing until the end of writing in June 2013, I refer to them in the present tense.

I developed a detailed understanding of the workings of the Ulwazi Programme. This entailed investigation into the particulars of the programme's establishment, the institutional framework in which it is situated as part of the eThekweni Municipality, as well as the policies that contributed to its development. It was also necessary for me to learn about the programme's aims and politics, the way it was framed, its everyday practices, including the material produced during the period of my fieldwork, who participated in and contributed to it, and how they did so. Here, I took inspiration from Ann Stoler's (2009) mode of doing ethnographies of archives, which she calls reading "along the grain". By this she means carrying out a careful examination of the archival habits and conventions in a particular place and time, in her case, to understand more fully the nature of colonial governance. While Stoler's approach was both anthropological and historical as she was concerned with colonial archiving the practices

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<sup>13</sup> A wiki is an editable website designed to enable contributions and modifications from multiple users.

of nineteenth-century Netherlands Indies, I was also able to enter the world of the Ulwazi Programme participants and observe their daily practices and the ways in which they ‘archived’ or contributed to the Ulwazi Wiki.

Over a period of six months, from October 2009, I monitored submissions on the Ulwazi Wiki, observing how materials emerged. During this time, I attended staff meetings to get a sense of how the project was framed and presented to Ulwazi Programme ‘fieldworkers’ – contributors who were tasked with collecting local histories in Umbumbulu and others areas within the municipality and submitting them to the Ulwazi Wiki. I also shadowed the fieldworkers for a period to determine how they operated in the field. Through a variety of mechanisms, they recorded the histories and practices of people they considered to be of sufficient interest to be included on the Ulwazi Wiki. Background knowledge of the fieldworkers helped me to understand their frames of reference and how this influenced their process of selection. In-depth, unstructured interviews were used to elucidate their life histories, their perspectives on how the Ulwazi Programme functions, their opinions of it and how they went about selecting and collecting content for it.

During the early part of my research on the Ulwazi Programme it became evident that both the Ulwazi Programme leader and the Deputy Head of the eThekweni Heritage and Libraries Department perceived the role of the programme to be custodial, safeguarding the histories, knowledge and culture of Umbumbulu and other areas within the municipality. Following this realisation, in addition to recurring, unstructured discussions

with members of the Ulwazi Programme team (including the Programme Leader, the fieldworkers and my brother, Niall McNulty, who works as the digital media consultant for the project), I attempted to identify other sites of custodial activity. I actively sought out people in Umbumbulu who were conserving materials relevant to, were dealing with, and were making particular claims about, the past.

Mwelela Cele, the then Senior Reading Room Librarian at the Killie Campbell Library, was a source of much information. He was from Inanda, an area to the north of Durban, but had attended high school at Adams College in Umbumbulu. He was able to direct me to, and connect me with, different people in the area who were actively engaging with the past in different forms and across a broad array of media. Although I initially saw Mwelela Cele as a professional librarian servicing my research needs, I soon realised that he was, in fact, one of the subjects of my study. He provided detailed commentary on those who were dealing with the past in Umbumbulu, on contemporary politics in KwaZulu-Natal and was also actively involved in history writing. He was registered for a Master's degree in history at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and his thesis focussed on the unwritten history of the Durban Bantu Social Centre from 1933 – 1960. He also wrote about aspects of his family's history in the local press (Cele, 2012) and contributed to a documentary developed by the Ulwazi Programme called "Memories of Inanda", in which he interviewed, amongst others, members of his immediate family.

Through Mwelela Cele I learnt about, and was able to engage with, Siyabonga Mkhize (his former colleague) and Desmond Makhanya (the father of his old classmate), two

local historians from Umbumbulu. Siyabonga Mkhize's book, *Uhlanga lwas'Embo: the history of the Embo people* (2007), presents his version of the history of the Mkhizes, many of whom are located in and around Umbumbulu. Once I had contacted and met with him, I noticed that Siyabonga Mkhize had strong custodial tendencies and a tangible desire to make a claim on the past. Following a lead from Mwelela Cele, I was able to track down Desmond Makhanya who also exhibited custodial tendencies and a strong desire to enter into the record the history of the Makhanya of Umbumbulu.

In dealing with Siyabonga Mkhize and Desmond Makhanya, I extended and improvised the method of reading along the grain to explore their practices, what they produced, their motivation behind producing their respective manuscripts and their efforts to enter these into the record. As with the Ulwazi Wiki, I paid close attention to the texts that were generated, the settings in which they were produced, and the contexts and conditions of their production. Over a period of about two years I held a mixture of semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with Siyabonga Mkhize and Desmond Makhanya at their respective homes. I also gave attention to the broader environments in which they operated, partly by speaking to and tracking key people involved, in one way or another, with the production of their manuscripts. These included members of staff at the Killie Campbell Library, academics at local history departments of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and members of staff at the Office of the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, amongst others. This approach also led me into contemporary Mkhize and Makhanya politics, which I followed by attending events linked to the subjects of my research and following developments in the press that were pertinent to the aims of the study.

Preparatory reading on KwaZulu-Natal alerted me to the role of traditional leaders as custodians of tradition and custom, and to Victor Mkhize, who runs the municipality's traditional leader support office, which mediates between the traditional leaders and the eThekweni Municipality. Victor Mkhize was very helpful in putting me in contact with traditional leaders from the Makhanya and Mkhize areas of Umbumbulu. My research focussed on two Traditional Authority Areas in Umbumbulu, namely the Makhanya area, Sobonakhona, and one of the Mkhize areas, Embo-Nkasa, administered by traditional leaders, Inkosi Khetha Makhanya and Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize respectively. I had wanted to include the perspectives and practices of both Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize and Inkosi Langalas'Embo Mkhize, the chiefs involved in an ongoing Mkhize succession dispute between the Embo-Nkasa and Embo-Thimuni lineages. I made several attempts and about fifty telephone calls to try and speak with Langalas'Embo Mkhize, the traditional leader of the Embo-Thimuni Traditional Authority Area but to no avail. In her doctoral thesis, Sarah Mathis (2008: 5) recalls that he kept a low profile in the area and during her two years of fieldwork, she rarely saw him even though she lived a short drive from his house. Similarly, Victor Mkhize, with whom I had numerous interactions, also pointed out how elusive he was. When I asked him about meeting with Inkosi Langalas'Embo, he replied, "He is like a spirit, that is how he behaves. I can make you see him but at the moment, whoever is coming in, he tries by all means to avoid them..." (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 June 15)

Although Victor Mkhize was involved in, and gave comment on, Mkhize clan politics, I mainly engaged with him in his professional capacity as the manager of the traditional

leader support office. As such, the repeated interviews I had with him were always quite formal in nature and were held in the conference room of his office in Pinetown, near Durban. My interactions with the traditional leaders were a mix of ongoing formal and informal visits, in some instances at their homes and in others, at their offices, known as Tribal Authority Offices. In the case of Inkosi Khetha Makhanya, I attended his court and had fairly formal interviews with him, and in most cases, his advisors, at his office. I always met Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize at his house and our interactions were made up of informal conversations in his lounge.

### *Locating the field*

During the process of doing fieldwork I began to think about the location of my field. It was situated in a number of sites – in semi-rural areas of Umbumbulu, in the homes and offices of traditional leaders and local historians, in government offices, at the eThekweni Municipality's library headquarters and online, on the Ulwazi Wiki. While disciplinary lines are increasingly blurred, fieldwork remains a constituent element of the anthropological approach. In seeking to locate, or perhaps to dislocate, my field site, I read *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science* (1997), a book that dealt with the disputed terrain of the field and offered insight into how it might be re-conceptualised. The editors, Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, raise questions about a clear distinction between the 'field' and 'home', and how these are often times intertwined. They ask how the field might be refigured to include various interrelated social-political sites and locations, sentiments that are echoed and expanded upon by other contributors to the book.

Conventional anthropological conceptions of the 'field' and 'fieldwork' are positioned in opposition to that of 'home' – the field is somewhere that is not home, historically defined by spatial separation. Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 12 – 13) offer a critical discussion of these conceptions and of established modes of anthropological fieldwork, characterised by the anthropologist travelling to and entering the field to gather raw data and exiting it to return home to 'write up' and analyse what had been collected. Further distinction was often made between sites that were considered more 'anthropological', more exotic and further, both geographically and culturally, from home. For example, Africa was more anthropological than Europe and rural areas more so than cities. Ideas about a field characterised by the anthropologist travelling to untouched and unchanging 'non-Western' societies that could be holistically studied have obvious implications for African (and other) anthropologists who have spent their lives in what might constitute the 'field'.

Gupta and Ferguson (31 – 32) further question whether growing up in a culture might be a heterodox form of fieldwork and ask, "in what sense we might think of one's background – growing up, as it were, in the "field" – as a form of extended participant observation?" Due to linguistic and cultural inheritances, and personal life experiences, I was not conducting an "insider ethnography", the term itself open to debate.<sup>14</sup> My being 'white' marked me as an outsider at the same time as my Durban origin marked me as an insider – I grew up in Durban and was living there at the start of my research. I also studied Zulu language, literature and culture, and interacted with Zulu speakers for many

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<sup>14</sup> For more on the issues surrounding an "insider ethnography", fieldwork and travel, see Chapter 3 in Clifford (1997).

years before my research. As such, one might argue that my conceptualisation of 'home' as separate from the 'field' would be different to that of researchers from elsewhere in the world, doing fieldwork in KwaZulu-Natal. Or would it? Hastrup (1997: 152) suggests that it is "not the personal credentials and linguistic competence that determines whether a particular ethnographer works at home or elsewhere. 'Home' is a conceptual category with shifting reference."

### *Refiguring the 'field'*

My research required a broad conceptualisation and refiguring of the notion of the field. I carried out a form of institutional ethnography of the Ulwazi Programme and although I documented the activities and perspectives of members of the programme, I did so in order to understand it as a whole. The programme operates in a variety of different contexts – on the Internet, locally in Umbumbulu and as part of the eThekweni Municipality. The other subjects of my study also operated across different media and spaces. The manuscripts and books of local historians, as well as their presence on the Internet, including on social media networks like Facebook, all made up part of the non-localised, disembodied constituents of my research. Their activities also had a bearing on socio-political relations with local government, the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal and the Zulu king, which I discuss in the thesis. While far removed from the study of 'a people' in a defined locale in the old-fashioned anthropological sense, these elements formed part of the object of my enquiry and thus constituted part of the field. Therefore, while in some instances, the two traditional authority areas in Umbumbulu offered a geographic locus for my study, the field was not a specific bounded or localised environment that I



travelled to and left. Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 37) call for a de-centering of the field as “the one, privileged site of anthropological knowledge”, a move that they suggest could result in “a mode of study that cares about and pays attention to, the interlocking of multiple social-political sites and locations.” Their proposal of “shifting locations rather than bounded fields” resonated with my research and its various interconnected loci.

The researcher’s position and influence in the field must be made explicit, as it is never a neutral one. Fieldwork may generate events that are presented as fact but the ethnographer’s presence is always felt as s/he is “actively engaged in the construction of the ethnographic reality.” (Hastrup, 1995: 16) Furthermore, the way in which the ethnographer is perceived by respondents, based on a number of criteria such as age, race and language competency, will determine the level and types of access s/he is given, the resultant interactions and types of data produced (16). My association with the Ulwazi Programme is through my brother, Niall McNulty, who built and maintains the Ulwazi Wiki. This gave me easy access to online data and was useful in creating and maintaining links with the programme staff. However, at times, this familiarity was misconstrued. At staff meetings, I was often asked by the Programme Leader to assist the fieldworkers, who had limited digital literacy, with their submissions to the Ulwazi Wiki. It seemed important to only offer technical advice and not to shape the way in which they conceived of the wiki and what they contributed to it.

My interactions with local historians and traditional leaders also brought to light my position as a researcher and the different ways in which I was managed by them. For

example, when the Makhanya chief, Inkosi Khetha Makhanya and his advisors realised that I could speak Zulu, they insisted that our whole discussion, and subsequent meetings, be conducted in Zulu. In some ways this restricted the type of information I was able to gather but in other ways, it stimulated new types of interactions and forms of data, including those that were Zulu language specific. In different instances, the local historians, Siyabonga Mkhize and Desmond Makhanya, also saw me as one of their resources, as a potential channel through which to make connections with institutions like the municipality and university. Siyabonga Mkhize, a self-proclaimed “clan historian”, was interested in the Ulwazi Programme and asked me to arrange a meeting between him and the Programme Leader, which I ultimately decided against doing and they did not meet or work together. I wanted to be as unobtrusive as possible and felt it inappropriate to stimulate a new relationship between the subjects of my study. Desmond Makhanya, who had a strong desire to get his manuscript published, saw my association with the university as one avenue to achieve this. He had tried, unsuccessfully, to get the work published with the help of academic historian, Dr. Vukile Khumalo, from the Department of History at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

### **Ethics**

The study was carried out with a registration at the Social Anthropology Department of the University of Cape Town where all student and staff research is expected to abide by Anthropology Southern Africa’s Principles of Conduct. The principles point to the fact that anthropologists often work in contexts defined by differential access to power and resources. They thus have an important responsibility to take into account the potential

negative effects of their research on those who participate in it, especially those in positions of reduced or limited power. Politics in KwaZulu-Natal continue to be volatile and in some cases, dangerous. An example of this is the recent politically motivated murders of eThekweni regional secretary, Sbu Sibiya, and ANC chief whip, Wiseman Mshibe (Letsoalo, Molele and Pietersen, 2012). Research and data that relate to ideas about identity and the politics thereof are often highly charged and potentially endangering to respondents, as is evidenced by the political rifts and violence between ANC members and Inkatha Zulu nationalists in the early 1990s, as well as the more recent death threats aimed at applicants to the Nhlapo Commission who were seen to be opposing established ideas of Zulu identity. Blatant attacks on established notions of Zuluness in KwaZulu-Natal were normally met by a vehement backlash from the Zulu king (Sithole, 2008: xv – xvi). The politics of the past are intimately linked with the politics of identity and all of the subjects of my study dealt with the past in some way – as clan historians, local history producers and as traditional leaders. Many were also directly involved in contemporary identity politics, making claims on the past for recognition of localised identities, and in most instances, in positions of reduced or limited power. These politics were cautiously navigated and characterised by slight movements and tentative steps. Nevertheless, as we will see, there were discernable tensions amongst the Mkhizes, most notably between Siyabonga and Victor Mkhize, and between the *amakhosi* and local government.

I was struck by the interrelatedness of the subjects of my study. For example, as we will see, local historian, Siyabonga Mkhize was involved in Mkhize clan affairs with

municipal worker, Victor Mkhize and with the KwaZulu-Natal premier, Zweli Mkhize. Siyabonga Mkhize was also involved in one of the premier's research projects, as was Desmond Makhanya and other people I encountered during the course of my fieldwork such as academic historians, Jabulani Sithole and Vukile Khumalo. Therefore, many of the people I interacted with knew each other in a personal or working capacity and they negotiated their relationships on multiple fronts, whilst managing their own and others' agendas. The interactions between the subjects of my research were often times subtle and I did not want to disrupt them by, for example, exposing confidential information. The anthropological principles of conduct state that the primary responsibility is to research participants and to protect them from any harm, which could include the use of protective devices like giving pseudonyms to both people and places. In the first two and a half years of my research, whenever I presented at workshops or academic conferences, I kept confidential the personal information of those who were interviewed (academics, project leaders, municipal workers, librarians, local history producers) by anonymising them to protect their identities. I chose to do this in anticipation of any potential negative repercussions as a result of my research output.

In line with Anthropology Southern Africa's Principles of Conduct, I had made clear to all of the participants in the study, the nature of the research, its objectives and what the collected data might be used for (PhD thesis, publications, conference papers). I obtained written consent for participation in the research from all parties involved, as well as permission to use their names, materials such as written manuscripts, books and content on the Ulwazi Programme website. I also made clear that participants could withhold

their support for the research or to withdraw their consent at any time. About midway through the research, one of the participants expressed concerns over his safety and the potential for some of the materials I had accessed and the activities I had documented, to have life threatening consequences if they were made available in the public realm. Up until that point, I had anonymised the details of all research participants but at that time I was planning to publish some of my work and, with their permission, include participants' names. With the advice of the ethics committee at the University of Cape Town' Department of Anthropology, I explained to the participant that others had already documented much of what I was writing about that concerned him but that I wanted to allay his fears and include his concerns in the research output. I proceeded to send him copies of the chapter that dealt with him and the paper I wanted to publish. He read my work and asked that I remove reference to some of the more sensitive materials. I did so and he agreed that I could use his name in publications and in the thesis. Through these kinds of measures I have adhered to Anthropology Southern Africa's Principles of Conduct and have attempted to carry out an ethically sound research study.

### **Thesis Structure**

Chapter Two presents a detailed analysis of the Ulwazi Programme, covering the particulars of its establishment, its policies and everyday practices, and the institutional frameworks in which it operates. The chapter argues that the apparently democratised, bureaucratic environment in which the Ulwazi Programme operates is, in fact, a constraining one, allowing only certain types of 'indigenous knowledge' and histories to surface while other forms of knowledge and histories are precluded. Nevertheless, the

study reveals that the histories of pressing social issues such as poverty, dispossession, identity, political violence and conflict surface through a loosely defined notion of indigenous knowledge and are contained within the Ulwazi Wiki.

Through initiatives like the Ulwazi Programme, the eThekweni Municipality is positioning itself as a custodian of far-reaching and inclusive categories of the past, like 'heritage' and 'indigenous knowledge', which overlap significantly with tradition and custom. Chapter Three demonstrates that tradition and custom are cultural and political resources, mobilised in attempts to consolidate power in Umbumbulu. In the chapter, I examine competing claims to custodianship by the municipality and *amakhosi* who function as different parts of cooperative local government. My analysis shows mounting pressure on the *amakhosi* to defend the tradition and custom on which their authority is based but also to bow to a documentary regime in which accountability is upheld through the written record. I argue that although the balance of power has shifted to the ANC municipality, which is starting to gain access to and officialise the complex array of things rooted in understandings of the past and captured under the notion of tradition and custom, the *amakhosi* remain the primary determiners of the meaning of this body of knowledge.

Chapter Four documents the practices of Siyabonga Mkhize, an historian and *imbongi* or praise poet of the Mkhize clan, who has written a book on the history of the Mkhize in Umbumbulu. In the chapter I argue that his activities demonstrate an overlap between custodial and productive impulses, revealing a blurred distinction between custodianship

of sources and the production of a version of history. Siyabonga Mkhize's book is also an intervention in a longstanding and ongoing succession debate within the Mkhize clan and the thesis chapter brings to light a localised struggle between at least two Mkhize factions over the interpretation of the clan history. The intra-Mkhize struggle is also indicative of a wider, changing political environment in which, I maintain, the nationalistic impulses of other clans seeking to engage with their pasts, are evident and not restricted to the Mkhizes alone. The chapter discusses the assertions of these various cultural movements, calling for recognition of their pre-Zulu customs, traditions and identities in contrast to the Zulu royal house, which seeks to maintain its historic monopoly and custodianship of generic 'Zulu' traditions and customs.

Chapter Five focuses on the contemporary production and preservation of a *kholwa*<sup>15</sup> heritage, generally associated with mission-educated Zulu-speaking people in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It deals with the work of Desmond Makhanya who has written the history of the Adams Mission Station and College, a *kholwa* centre of education, intimately linked to the history of his immediate and extended family. Like Siyabonga Mkhize, Desmond Makhanya's activities trouble hard and fast categories of custodianship and history production. In the chapter, I argue that in writing the institutional history of the college and mission station, Desmond Makhanya is in fact making a claim on modernity and trying to enter into the record the history of his family. The contemporary mobilisation of the college's history is also linked to its potential for socio-economic development as a viable religio-heritage tourist attraction.

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<sup>15</sup> In the thesis I use *i/anakholwa* as a noun to describe individuals as well as the root *kholwa* as both an adjective and noun to describe people and their beliefs.

## ***Chapter Two – “Sharing Indigenous Knowledge”***

Dominant ideas about heritage in post-apartheid South Africa have been marked by notions of redress, the development of a national heritage, a singular, shared past and the post-apartheid government’s supposed recognition of previously marginalised narratives. Key to these developments has been a participatory approach in the development and management of heritage resources. As Shepherd (2008: 121) writes:

the two main current pieces of heritage legislation, the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) of 1999 and the National Heritage Council Act of 1999...[place] an emphasis on public participation in heritage management.

Throughout the thesis I refer to ‘history’ and ‘heritage’ and it is important to differentiate between the two terms. History attempts to determine what happened in the past. Historians, and others involved in the production of histories, are actively involved in producing a particular version of the past. History might thus be defined as the bodies of knowledge about the past produced by both professional and non-professional historians, together with the processes involved in the production of that past.

In *The Uses of Heritage*, Laurajane Smith (2006: 11) writes: “There is, really, no such thing as heritage”. This statement outlines the main argument of her book – that heritage is not a defined ‘thing’ with concrete meaning. Rather, it is a political practice in the present that has recourse to the past. The “uses of heritage” are often linked to power relations, the ability to legitimise or delegitimise certain aspects of the past and, as a result, are employed by different groups to achieve specific political aims. Through the process of defining what does and not constitute the nation’s heritage, these groups promote the idea of a common inheritance, a singular past that cannot be altered.



In a similar argument, Derek Peterson (forthcoming) notes that heritage work in Africa was a mode of political organisation through which colonial states “set out to order Africa” by developing museums collections, conducting ethnography and linguistic research. This made “anachronism into a source of authority, herding Africans, both intellectually and politically, into out-of-date regimes”. He notes how the work of heritage in postcolonial Africa, both within and outside of the confines of institutions like museums, operates in a similar manner albeit in a different socio-political climate, and reveals the potential for “monopolist practices” and “a recrudescence of the out-of-date and the anachronistic”.

Adding a further layer to the discussion, Hamilton (forthcoming) suggests that a clear distinction between history and heritage lies in the ways in which the past and present intersect. While history, much like heritage, can facilitate forms of inclusion or exclusion, it may also “allow for voluntary and flexible forms of identification across time, or none at all”. Heritage, on the other hand, “asserts belonging and connection across time”. It does little to recognise or accommodate the kinds of variability or ambiguity that history does.

Born of changes in the broader political context and the policy environment, the Ulwazi Programme is a new South African library initiative that has been set up by the eThekweni Municipality’s Libraries and Heritage Department to:

preserve and disseminate indigenous knowledge of local communities in the greater Durban area. It [the Ulwazi Project] creates a collaborative online database of local indigenous knowledge as part of the Public Library’s digital resources, relying on

community participation for delivering content and posting the content on the Web. (Ulwazi Programme, n.d.a)

While the notion of heritage dominated early post-apartheid efforts to transform South Africa's cultural sector, in the post-Mandela presidency era when President Thabo Mbeki was in power, and when the Ulwazi Programme was first conceptualised, significant attention was given to the concept of 'indigenous knowledge', linked to ideas around 'Africanness' and autochthony. Indigenous knowledge as a concept and in the form of government policy only came to the Programme Leader once she had conceptualised the programme model. The programme is informed by local (municipal), national and international policies, and draws heavily on the idea of indigenous knowledge as evidenced by its tag line, "sharing indigenous knowledge". In particular, it has followed the National Policy on Indigenous Knowledge Systems, which calls for the use of new technologies to allow what it calls "indigenous and local communities" to record and share their history, culture and language (Department of Science and Technology, 2005: 33). It uses the existing library infrastructure and Web 2.0 technologies to create what its advocates term a collaborative, online indigenous knowledge resource in the form of a wiki, like Wikipedia, but localised for the eThekweni Municipality. The Programme Leader selects 'fieldworkers' from the immediate communities served by the library, whom, with the help of an external digital media consultant, she trains to develop digital audio and visual material (such as recorded oral histories and photographs of material culture) in the areas in which they live. Library staff and the Digital Media Consultant then teach fieldworkers to add this content, which the programme considers to be "local, indigenous knowledge", to the Ulwazi Wiki, using their local libraries and the Ulwazi Programme's central office at the municipal library in Durban as submission points. The

libraries also serve as Internet access points where members of the communities can browse the Ulwazi Wiki and the Internet, and contribute to the wiki if they have user accounts. Since 2010, the Ulwazi Wiki has allowed for submissions via cell phone for which the contributors are paid in cell phone credit if their submissions are accepted (Ulwazi Programme, 2010).

I first came to know of the Ulwazi Programme through my brother, Niall McNulty, who works as the Digital Media Consultant (hereafter referred to as such). He set up the wiki infrastructure and manages the technical aspects of the project. He also maintains the Ulwazi Programme website (distinct from the editable 'Community Memory' wiki section), which features news, updates and information about the project but is not editable by members of the public. I was interested in the notion of collaborative community-oriented digital archives and was attracted to the Ulwazi Programme as it offered a seemingly democratised, collaborative and grassroots approach to the collection and preservation of local history and culture. Local people are trained to record and collect local histories and contemporary culture to be shared and preserved on the Ulwazi website. However, the programme's claims to be an inclusive and community-oriented initiative raise important questions about the collection of local knowledge within an institutionalised, local government framework. What constitutes local 'knowledge' and who decides this? What does a programme like this collect and what does it preclude? What power relations are at play in the collection and submission of content? To what extent is the programme inclusive and to what extent does it propose an idealised model of community-oriented heritage?

In this chapter I consider critically eThekweni Municipality's advancement of the Ulwazi Programme as an inclusive and democratised initiative that collects the 'peoples' history'. I argue that the programme maintains an idealistic view of community heritage that is both informed, and governed, by policy at various levels. I further suggest that although fieldworkers from selected communities in the Durban municipality participate in the collection of local knowledge, there are mechanisms in place that result in the preclusion of certain knowledge and histories, a curated version of the past. What is collected follows a particular notion of indigenous knowledge, linked to municipal and national aims and priorities. I take into account the environment in which the Ulwazi Programme was established, the policies that have been used in its development and the frameworks in which it operates. I consider the programme's processes, who engages with it, the type of materials it collected over a certain period and the significance of what it precluded. A focus on the Ulwazi Programme allows for further insights into the wider context of heritage and ways in which the past is being engaged in post-apartheid South Africa.

### **The Ulwazi Programme**

The Ulwazi Programme aims to address the needs of the previously underrepresented majority by facilitating the collection of local, contemporary histories and culture in the areas served by the eThekweni Municipal Library. The project is unique in that it is the first of its kind in South Africa to promote an apparently democratised collection policy and the use of Web 2.0 technologies and community participation. Following the establishment of the programme, the Presidential National Commission on the Information Society and Development (PNC on ISAD) aimed to create a similar project

on a national level, the National Digital Repository (NDR), and approached the Programme Leader to elicit her perspective on how the national project should function. Through community participation, the NDR aimed to “collect, preserve, promote and disseminate South Africa’s cultural heritage” (National Digital Repository, n.d.).

### *Establishment*

The Ulwazi Programme was the brainchild of a Senior Librarian for Software Applications at eThekweni Municipal Library, Betsie Greyling, hereafter referred to as the Programme Leader. The Programme Leader has a diverse background, including a B.Sc. in Psychology and Mathematical Statistics, a higher diploma in Library Science, postgraduate university degrees in Geology and experience as a palaeontology researcher and librarian. For four years in the 1980s, she was a natural sciences librarian at the former University of Durban-Westville (UDW). For most of the 1990s, she was a palaeontology researcher at the Department of Geology at UDW, publishing several research papers on Cretaceous marine invertebrates from Zululand and Angola. In 1997, she was appointed as a Municipal Acquisitions Librarian and held this position until 2003, following which she became the Senior Systems Librarian of the eThekweni Municipal Library Service.

In 2006, she attended the SCECSAL (Standing Conference of Eastern, Central and Southern African Library and Information Associations) Conference for which the theme was ‘Librarianship as a bridge to an Information and Knowledge Society in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa’. In one of our meetings, she explained that the conference

highlighted “the need for information in Africa on the one hand and also one of the big problems to the information society in Africa... that global information is irrelevant to the people. They needed their own information, local and indigenous content.” (Programme Leader, interview, 2009 December 02) In an article that the Programme Leader published, she offered her rationale for the programme. Firstly, she felt that insufficient management systems for indigenous knowledge perpetuated the lack of local content on the Internet, resulting in a disinterest in digital resources and poor digital literacy in local communities. Secondly, she realised the potential of the existing library infrastructure to facilitate the participation of different constituencies served by the municipality in the recording and dissemination of their local history and culture. These factors led the Programme Leader to devise a model for indigenous knowledge management (Greyling, 2008).

In order to create the model that she had envisaged, she employed the Digital Media Consultant who had considerable experience in developing web-based cultural projects. He gave the Programme Leader suggestions on how the project could be implemented, using MediaWiki software, which allows for the creation of a localised wiki, a platform that enables multiple contributions from the general public. In my discussion with the digital media consultant, he explained that during the initial stages of the project, he helped to create categories for the wiki, based on existing digitised content and the first contributions from the fieldworkers. While the Programme Leader drew on library categorisation as the basis for ordering the content, he was more concerned with the information architecture and how this would contribute to the running of the website and

an integrated presence on the Internet. Categorising and ‘tagging’ (providing more in-depth detail about) content is an integral part of setting up and maintaining a website as search engines like Google create indexes of the Internet so that they are able to retrieve relevant content when the Internet users enter particular search terms. If a website is laid out, categorised and tagged in a way that “Google likes it”, the website and its content will feature in the top search engine results, thereby improving its “web presence”, its public profile on the Internet. Social media networks like Facebook and Twitter, which the Digital Media Consultant also manages for the Ulwazi Programme, can also be manipulated to improve a website’s online presence. Therefore, although he was involved in the development of the early categories for the Ulwazi Programme, he explained that his focus was on the website’s information architecture and the place of these categories within that infrastructure (Digital Media Consultant, interview, 2012 October 10). Before the Ulwazi Programme was adopted by the eThekweni Municipality, the Programme Leader presented it to various institutions in order to secure funding for its implementation. In February 2008, the initial seed funding came from the eThekweni Municipality’s Information Systems Department and following the success of an initial Ulwazi Programme pilot project, the eThekweni Libraries and Heritage Department adopted and funded the programme. It is now an official project operational in outlying areas of the eThekweni Municipality, namely Umlazi, Inanda, Ntuzuma, KwaMashu and Umbumbulu, the focus of my research.

### *Aims*

In one of my meetings with the Programme Leader, she explained to me that she designed the model first and foremost as a librarian and that the primary aims of the Ulwazi Programme, as a library-affiliated initiative, are the preservation, organisation and dissemination of knowledge on a wide scale, as “that is what libraries do” (Programme Leader, interview, 2009 October 08). Key to the programme is use of new technologies to preserve and circulate local, ‘indigenous knowledge’ through an online repository to which local communities contribute digital content. The programme has a preservatory inclination but also deals with the circulation of resources relating to the past. As the Programme Leader wrote in an article that she co-authored, by “providing an online, contextually-based information service to local communities, public libraries in Africa will ensure future-oriented access to cultural heritage resources through 21st century information communication technologies (ICTs).” (Greyling and Zulu, 2010: 30)

In another article that she wrote, the Programme Leader maintains that the Ulwazi Programme strives to enable local communities to become part of the global information society by establishing a digital library of local indigenous knowledge that they create. It is based on the idea that access to a digital knowledge resource of local relevance facilitates the growth of digital and information literacy skills, the preservation of local indigenous knowledge, as well as potential economic empowerment of communities through skills development and knowledge provision (Greyling, 2009: 13). In an interview with the Programme Leader, she commented that community involvement was essential for the development of the programme and through skills transfer, she felt that



communities would be able to collect their own local history and culture within the infrastructure provided by the municipality. Interestingly, it is the focus on skills development that she highlighted as one of the primary objectives of the programme. She stated: “The content to me was always secondary. It was to transfer skills in the first place because eventually every nation should take ownership of its own history and its own culture. It is not meant for outsiders to record and to preserve someone else’s culture” (Programme Leader, interview, 2009 December 02). Therefore, the Programme Leader was primarily concerned with creating the infrastructure, a digital platform, to be populated with content generated by inhabitants of the eThekweni Municipality.

#### *Institutional Framework, Policy and Politics*

In order to appreciate the Ulwazi Programme and its operations, it is necessary to understand the institutional framework in which the programme was established, is now situated and the policies that have been used to develop it. The Programme Leader explained that given her position in the eThekweni Municipality, she was required to observe its Integrated Development Plan (IDP) when devising the Ulwazi Programme model. The Municipal Systems Act 132 of 2000 insists that all municipalities in South Africa develop IDPs, five-year strategic documents that direct all municipal activities and are reviewed annually in consultation with stakeholders and communities. Municipal IDPs are informed by both national governmental policy and local circumstances. The plans are implemented at municipal level and aim to address locally defined needs but must also follow the national government’s policy (Deputy Head of eThekweni Libraries and Heritage, interview, 2009 October 30). Therefore, in order to be eligible to compete

for limited municipal funding, projects must adhere to their municipality's IDP, which in turn relates to, and is governed by, the national policy.

The eThekweni Municipality's IDP is an eight-part plan and the Ulwazi Programme straddles, or addresses, Plans Five and Six. Plan Five focuses on empowering citizens by "enhancing skills, providing easily accessible information" and bridging the "digital divide" by making Durban a "digitally Smart City", although no further elaboration is offered on how this might be achieved. Plan Six deals with cultural diversity and the promotion and conservation of heritage through local history projects and the use of gallery and museum spaces (eThekweni Municipality, 2009: 73 – 74, 80). Location specific needs must also be taken into consideration. The Programme Leader explained that through library surveys from various library-using communities, "we were made aware of the needs in the communities; their lack of digital literacy, their lack of empowerment, the lack of digital skills, their lack of knowledge of their own communities, the fact that their indigenous knowledge was getting lost at an alarming rate..." (Programme Leader, interview, 2009 October 08).

The programme model is thus based on community needs as identified by the municipal library, as well as various national and international policies. It follows the eThekweni Municipality's IDP and the national Department of Science and Technology's NIKSO (National Indigenous Knowledge Systems Office) mandate for libraries, which encourages, "indigenous and local communities to actively record and share their contemporary history, culture and language" and emphasises the creative use of new

technologies to “support Indigenous and local community development” (Department of Science and Technology, 2005: 33). It is also informed by the Geneva Plan of Action, generated by the World Summit on the Information Society, which calls for free or affordable access to information and knowledge via community access points (such as a digital library service), the development of Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills and the empowerment of local communities to use ICTs, as well as policies that support the respect, preservation and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity, and the generation of local content to suit the linguistic and cultural context of the users (Presidential National Commission on the Information Society and Development n.d.: 42 – 44).

#### *Staff and Submissions*

The Ulwazi Programme has a fluctuating number of staff at various levels. In addition to the Programme Leader, it employs an external digital media consultant to maintain the website, a Digital Content Manager (for four days a week) to moderate content that is submitted to the wiki, as well as a varying number of fieldworkers, trained by the Ulwazi Programme to collect content in their areas. For example, in February 2012, there were seven fieldworkers (including one from Umbumbulu) and two trainees. This number fluctuates on a regular basis (approximately every three months) as new recruits join the programme and others leave it, most commonly because they have found permanent work (digital media consultant, interview, 2012 February 07). Fieldworkers collect content under the three broad categories of History, Culture and Environment. They generally record interviews, oral histories and take photographs, which they then publish

on the Ulwazi Wiki as newspaper-style articles in English and in Zulu. My time in the field revealed how the fieldworkers from Umbumbulu relied on, and utilised, close-knit, local networks such as family, friends and neighbours, in order to collect content relevant to the programme. On various occasions, I joined them on their excursions to observe first-hand their methods – the ways in which they sourced and recorded what they felt constituted indigenous knowledge, generally traditional practices and the life histories of people from Umbumbulu. As I had a car, I drove the fieldworkers around the area, almost always to the houses of local people, whom they identified as friends and relatives. The fieldworkers often used a life history approach but to my surprise, Umbumbulu's recent history of political violence in the 1980s did not emerge in any great detail on the Ulwazi Wiki. Yet, in other settings, in discussion with the fieldworkers and members of local government who all grew up in Umbumbulu in the 1980s, it was a prominent topic of conversation and considered by them to be central to the area's history (Bheki Mchunu, interview, 2010 January 10, Bongiwe Ndlovu interview, 2011 June 17 and Zanele Shange, interview, 2011 June 17). I discuss these fieldworkers in more detail later in the chapter.

The Digital Content Manager, Mabusi Kgwete, comes from an area called Gamalakhe, near Port Shepstone, on the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal. She has a higher level of digital literacy and editing skills than the fieldworkers, as well as a greater level of access to the Ulwazi Wiki, including permission to delete pages. She has experience doing administration work, providing training and writing for the non-governmental sector with a focus on child and youth development. The Digital Content Manager's main focus is on

editing grammar, inserting internal and external links and tidying up existing submissions. While the Digital Content Manager is permanent, the fieldworkers are seen as volunteers but are given a monthly stipend, which is dependent on the number of submissions they make to the Ulwazi Wiki. Approximately three newspaper-style (text and image) submissions are expected from each fieldworker each month for which an amount of R600 is paid. It is mutually understood that no communication between fieldworkers and the Ulwazi Programme for a period of two months signifies that they no longer wish to be part of the programme. Each month fieldworker review meetings are held at the Ulwazi Programme Office, situated in the municipal library office, where fieldworkers submit what they have collected during the month. The Programme Leader explained that once content has been submitted by the fieldworkers, “we sit down together and share. Everyone gets a turn to explain what they have collected, what it’s about, how they did it and whether they had any problems so that the other fieldworkers can learn from their experiences.” (Programme Leader, interview, 2009 October 08)

### *Towards democratisation?*

The Ulwazi Programme can be situated in emerging global debates and strategies aimed at addressing forms of social exclusion and cultural inequality. Much of the discussion in the academy has centred on developing a more representative and comprehensive heritage in response to calls for a more inclusive society. Richard Sandell (1998: 410), for example, discussing museums as agents of social inclusion but his insights can equally be applied to other memory institutions like archives and libraries. He suggests three ways in which social inclusion can be gauged:

- (i) Representation—the extent to which an individual’s cultural heritage is represented within the mainstream cultural arena;
- (ii) Participation—the opportunities an individual has to participate in the process of cultural production; and
- (iii) Access—the opportunities to enjoy and appreciate cultural services (which can incorporate both (i) and (ii) above)

Resultant shifts in theory and practice have challenged the authoritative voice of memory institutions, and acknowledged the value of multiple voices, community consultation, participation and even control in the representation of culture. They have given rise to community-run museums, community archives, indigenous cultural centres and alternative approaches to heritage (Sandell, 2002; Butler, 2006). Digital technologies have also contributed to the discussion. The variability of these technologies is seen to encourage dialogue, multiple authorship and the exchange of ideas and opinions. In contrast to the closed authorship and fixed ideas of traditional museum and heritage practices, digital files circulate more freely and are open to further editing, authorship and interpretation. This suggests a more democratised mode of production as different constituencies can collect, interpret, alter and create new meanings for digital content as they see fit (Besser, 1997; Parry, 2007).

While archives in South Africa contributed to the selective shaping of social memory and the legitimisation of the apartheid state (Harris, 2002), Cheryl McEwan (2003: 747) suggests that the creation of post-apartheid or ‘postcolonial’ archives in South Africa will “allow previously marginalised groups...agency in their own representation”. These, she contends, will be most effective at local level where memory projects have their most radical effects in contrasting with sanitised and politicised versions of the past. In a similar argument, Andrew Flinn (2007: 153) writes that community archives, which he

defines as “the grassroots activities of documenting, recording and exploring community heritage in which community participation, control and ownership of the project is essential”, can be used to write history from the perspective of marginalised or underrepresented groups to include histories and identities that have been forgotten or suppressed. The potential of these types of initiatives to facilitate self-representation has been explored in various contexts. Examples include the Ara Irititja Digital Archive, a community-based initiative comprising repatriated materials of the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people of South Australia, the Northern Territory and Western Australia, the Maori digital archive set up by the Te Aitanga a Hauiti group at Uawa (Tolaga Bay) in New Zealand (Brown, 2007) and the District Six Museum and other community-run museums in South Africa (Witz, 2006; Rassool, 2007). Community is a fraught term that can be particularly multi-faceted and fluid, incorporating geography, culture or common interests, and which can be manipulated in the service of various agendas. Projects labelled ‘community initiatives’ often stem from calls for recognition or restitution and as such the impetus for the project comes from a particular local grouping, typically defined as a community on the basis of shared locality, culture, faith or common interest (Flinn, 2007: 153). They tend to operate *outside* of formal heritage projects as in the case of the District Six and Lwandle Migrant museums in Cape Town.

Conversely, the Ulwazi Programme operates *within* an institutional framework and stems from a broader, political and governmental project of restitution and change. As such, questions arise about the degree to which control and ownership by communities, two aspects of these types of projects that Flinn considers imperative, of the Ulwazi

Programme is evident or even possible. Community ownership and control of a municipal project is highly unlikely due to the bureaucratic structures in place. Indeed, the term ownership, like community, is difficult to qualify and open to different interpretations and degrees to which it might be applied. In a published article, the Programme Leader points more to the ownership of the indigenous knowledge that is collected rather than the project itself:

At the heart of the strategy of community participation lies a respect for cultural identity, traditions and religions, acknowledging community ownership of indigenous knowledge. Members from the community are selected to join the programme because they are connected to the source of the information and are the holders of the knowledge that the programme aims to preserve. Care is taken not to take indigenous representations out of context with interpretations that support the beliefs and biases of another culture. (Greyling, 2009: 4)

Therefore, even though the Ulwazi Programme functions as part of the eThekweni Municipality, it is based on a democratic idealism that aspires to facilitate ownership of ‘indigenous knowledge’ and to be inclusive in practice. The Programme Leader presented an essentialist notion of indigenous knowledge, however, as we will see later in the chapter, her interpretation of indigenous knowledge was loosely-defined and flexible, was limited to the geographic area of eThekweni Municipality and in attempts to promote inclusiveness, accommodated a broad array of materials. In the following sections, I offer a more detailed consideration of who accesses and uses the site, the programme’s processes and an understanding of how the Ulwazi Programme functions in the local context of Umbumbulu, in order to elucidate the extent to which it offers a democratised and inclusive mode of collecting and sharing local histories and culture.



### *Contributions, Access and Circulation*

The openness of the Ulwazi Wiki demonstrates attempts at inclusion. By its nature, a wiki is multi-authored, can be edited and re-edited, is continually evolving and subject to revision. The Ulwazi Wiki aims to be communally-constituted and accessible. This is in line with post-apartheid policies geared towards the creation of an apparently inclusive, participatory heritage in contrast to apartheid memory institutions in which resources relating to the past were held in physical repositories, and which, in many ways, excluded much of the ‘non-white’ population. During the time I tracked the Ulwazi Programme, content for the Ulwazi Wiki was supposedly generated by various residents of the eThekweni Municipality and made available (circulated on the Internet) to the local communities in which the programme was active, through access points at libraries and on cell phones. This suggested that it might offer a fluid and inclusive mode of collection, production and dissemination, particularly with the addition of cell phones, an ubiquitous technology in South Africa, as a tool with which to contribute to the Ulwazi Wiki. In the following section, I consider critically the programme’s claims for the Ulwazi Wiki to be used communally, for content to be generated by municipal residents other than the fieldworkers and the core Ulwazi Programme team, and for it to be accessible to the communities in which it operates.

### *Contribution*

As with other wikis, members of the public can create their own accounts in order to add their own content and edit the submissions of others. The Ulwazi Wiki calls for the “internet community at large and particularly people connected to the city of Durban to

register an account through our wiki and help improve the Ulwazi Community Memory by editing and adding to articles.” (Ulwazi Programme, n.d.b) For a better understanding of how the list of registered users and their contributions have evolved, it is useful to consider a specific period as well as overall usage statistics. During the period October 2009 to January 2010, there were 83 registered users. Of these, 17 were active and contributed or edited something on the Ulwazi Wiki. Of the 17, seven users only contributed or edited a single submission during this time. This is surprisingly low particularly as it was a period in which municipal librarians were introduced to the programme, given training on how to edit the Ulwazi Wiki and encouraged to submit content to it.

In January 2012, there were 575 registered users who consisted of Ulwazi Programme staff, librarians, members of the general public who had an interest in the Ulwazi Wiki, as well as a vast number of spam or false accounts. Like other wikis, the Ulwazi Wiki is run on an open system, which means that users can create their own accounts without the help of a site administrator. While this promotes open access and encourages multiple users, there is also the potential for spam – unsolicited and generally unwanted links to external websites that advertise products or commercial services. As such, a great number of registered users do not contribute content to the Ulwazi Wiki but rather attempt to publish spam links to external sites. To counter this, the Digital Media Consultant deletes these links and bans user accounts that attempt to publish spam (digital media consultant, interview, 2012 February 07). The active users list contained in the “Special Pages” of the wiki offers some insight into who is actually contributing to the site. It lists users who have contributed something to the Ulwazi Wiki or edited existing content in the past 30

days. In January 2012, the four users listed were the Programme Leader, the Digital Content Manager, one fieldworker and “Admin”, the digital media consultant’s administrative account used to format, add links and make administrative changes. This, along with the statistics from the period October 2009 to January 2010, point to the fact that the vast majority (if not all) of legitimate submissions and edits on the Ulwazi Wiki came from the fieldworkers, the Digital Content Manager and the Programme Leader, all of whom, to a greater or lesser extent, were paid employees of the Ulwazi Programme. A further indication of the lack of contributions from local communities is an incentive-based function that allows users to submit content to the wiki via their cell phones and offers airtime (cell phone credit) to users whose submissions are accepted and published on the Ulwazi Wiki. This service has been in operation since October 2011 but as of the end of January 2012, there were no contributions to the site via cell phone.

#### *Access and Circulation*

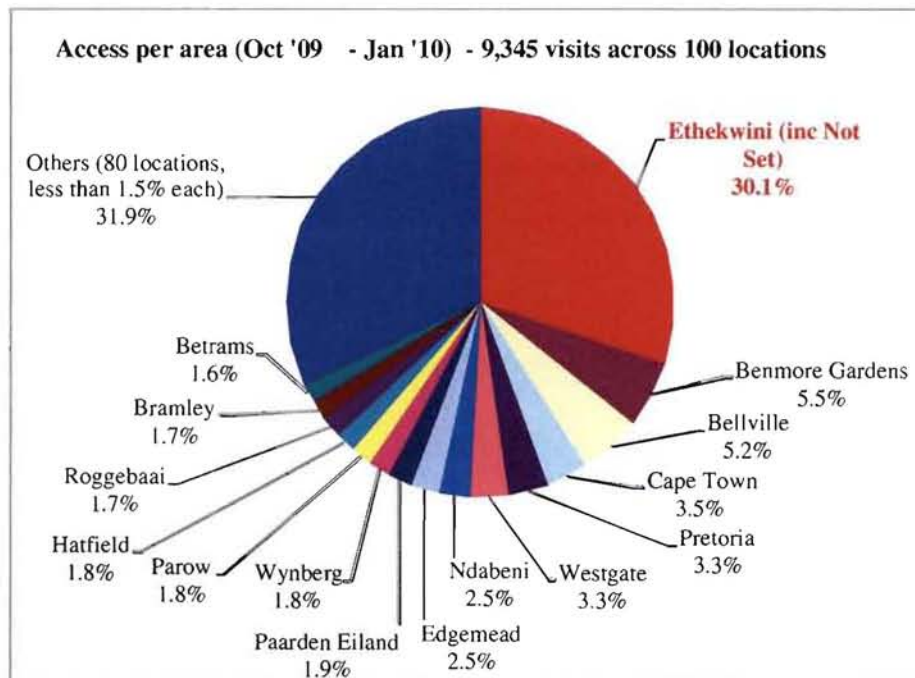
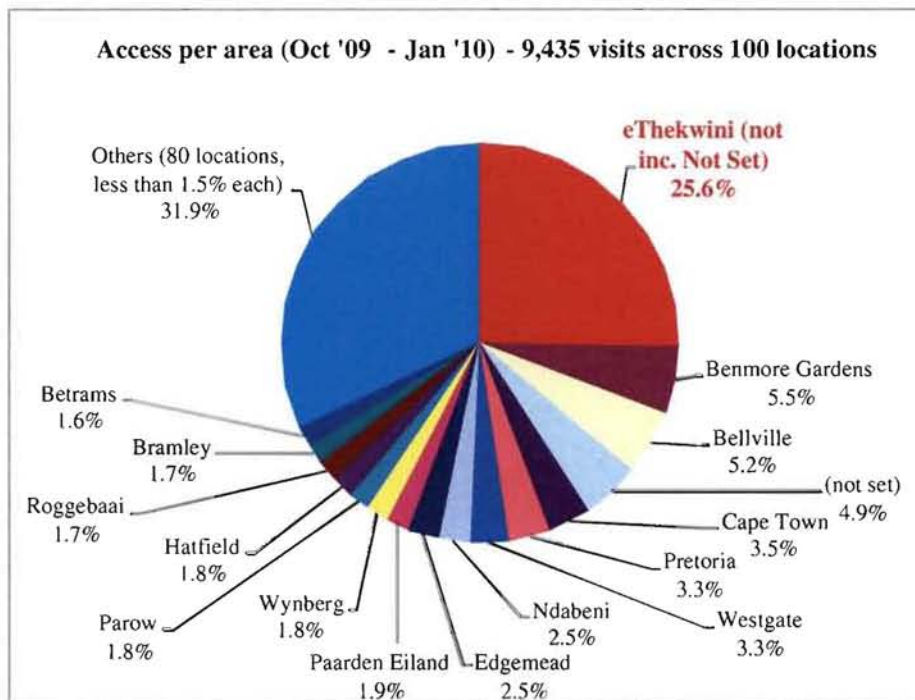
In this section I consider who accesses the Ulwazi Wiki, from where and the different ways (via standard or mobile Internet) they do so. The data presented here are various samples from the beginning of October to the end of January for the years 2009 – 2010, 2010 – 2011 and 2011 – 2012. The same period was chosen for each year due to an initial period of intensive fieldwork from October 2009 to January 2010 and in order to facilitate comparative analysis. December in South Africa is a holiday period, which meant that there were fewer fieldworker submissions during this month. At times, I refer to statistics for overall usage on the site, the period from the beginning of October 2009 to the end of January 2012. I also present data on cell phone access and usage, from its

inception as a feature on the Ulwazi Wiki in October 2010, to January 2012. The data presented are not comprehensive but offer a particular view of the Ulwazi Programme at certain times since its inception.

From the outset, it is important to note the difficulties in determining exactly who is using the Ulwazi Wiki. While modern Internet statistics programmes like Google Analytics, a service offered by Google that generates detailed statistics about the visitors to a website, can give us a fairly comprehensive idea of who is accessing the website, there are some limitations. Google Analytics uses an IP (or Internet Protocol) address, the unique address of a computer or other device like a cell phone or tablet, to determine the location of the computer accessing the wiki. However, there are multiple ways of accessing the Internet. Cell phones and 3G (or third generation) modems use cellular networks and will therefore register the IP address of the cellular tower the device (cell phone, tablet or computer using 3G connectivity) uses to access the Internet. A computer network, utilised by a number of institutions including libraries can also be used to connect multiple computers to the Internet using one 'entry point', resulting in a single IP address. In Google Analytics, these unknown locations feature as 'not set'. As such, I have taken this into consideration by excluding the variable 'not set' to determine the minimum number of users within the municipality. Conversely, the upper band for the range is determined by assigning 'not set' to the eThekweni Municipality. In terms of the analysis, all visits tied to locations within the eThekweni municipality were aggregated to provide a view of the local access. Specifically, the following areas were included into the eThekweni category: Durban, Glenwood, Overport, Mayville, Pinetown, Westville,

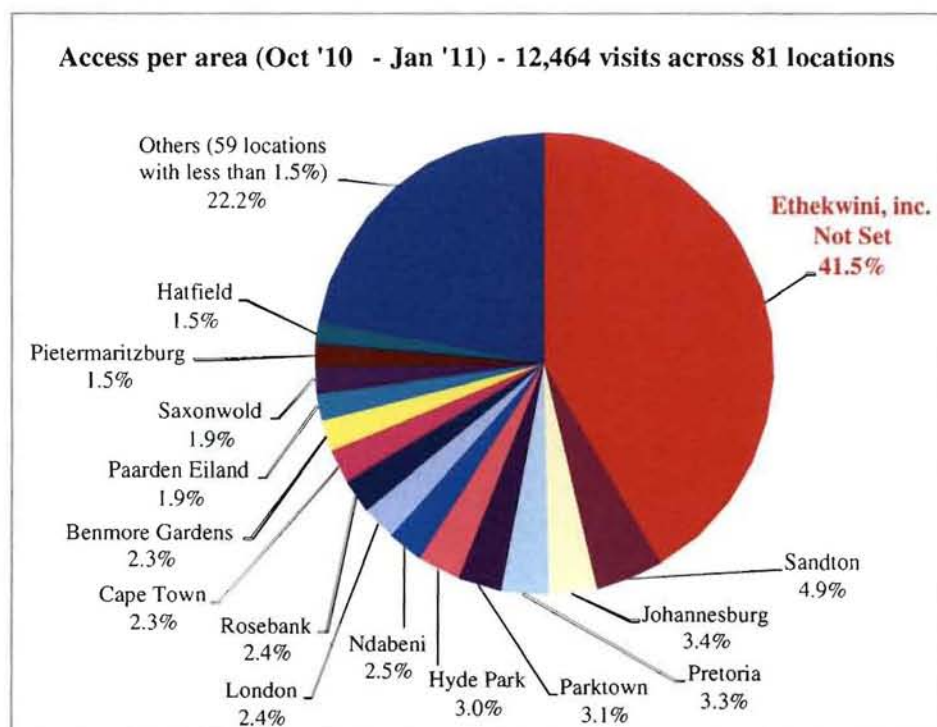
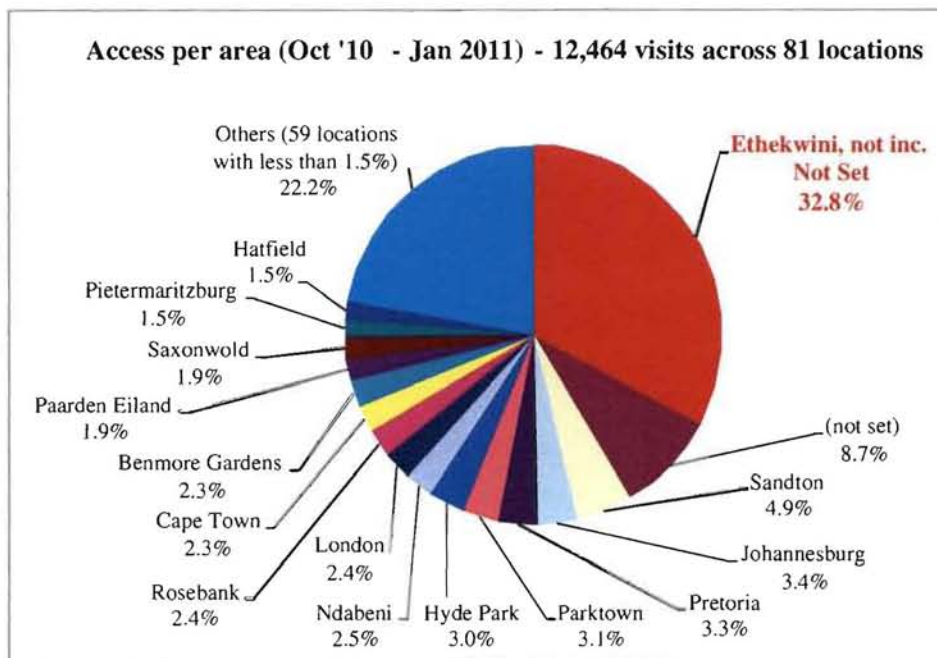
Umlazi, Greyville, Queensburgh, Durban North, Essenwood, Umkomaas, Empangeni,  
Berea and Umhlanga Rocks.

FIG. 1 Minimum and maximum number of users in eThekweni Municipality (Oct 2009 – Jan 2010). Source: Google Analytics.



During the period from the beginning of October 2009 to the end of January 2010 (Figure 1), statistics from or near the areas in which the programme is operational were very low. Of a total of 9345 visits, only 62 (0.7% of the total visitors) came from Umlazi, 11 (0.1%) for Umkomaas (south of Durban and flanking Umbumbulu) and 129 (1.4%) for Pinetown, potentially serving parts of the greater Umbumbulu area. A broader perspective shows that during this period 2388 to 2849 (a minimum of 25.6% to a maximum of 30.5%) of South African users accessed the Ulwazi Wiki from within the boundaries of the municipality. This means that at least one quarter of the users were located within this area and at most, under one third. These figures are surprisingly low given that part of the programme's mandate is for local knowledge to circulate within the communities in which it is collected. However, they are also understandable. There is limited access to computers and the Internet except through the library and cell phones, and a serious lack of digital literacy in the areas in which the programme is operational. Submissions to the wiki via cell phone were not possible at this time. Another contributing factor may have been a lack of awareness of the Ulwazi Programme in its formative stages.

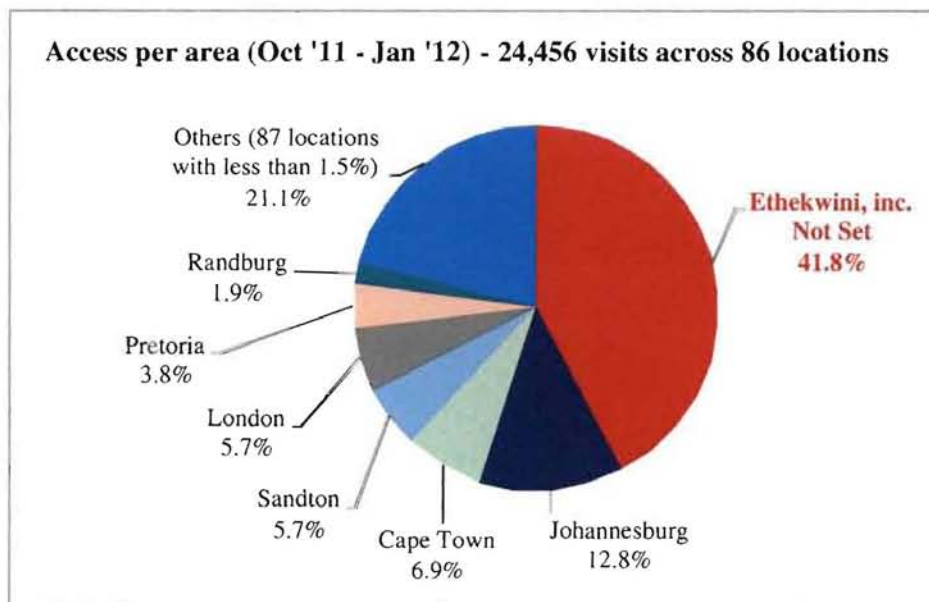
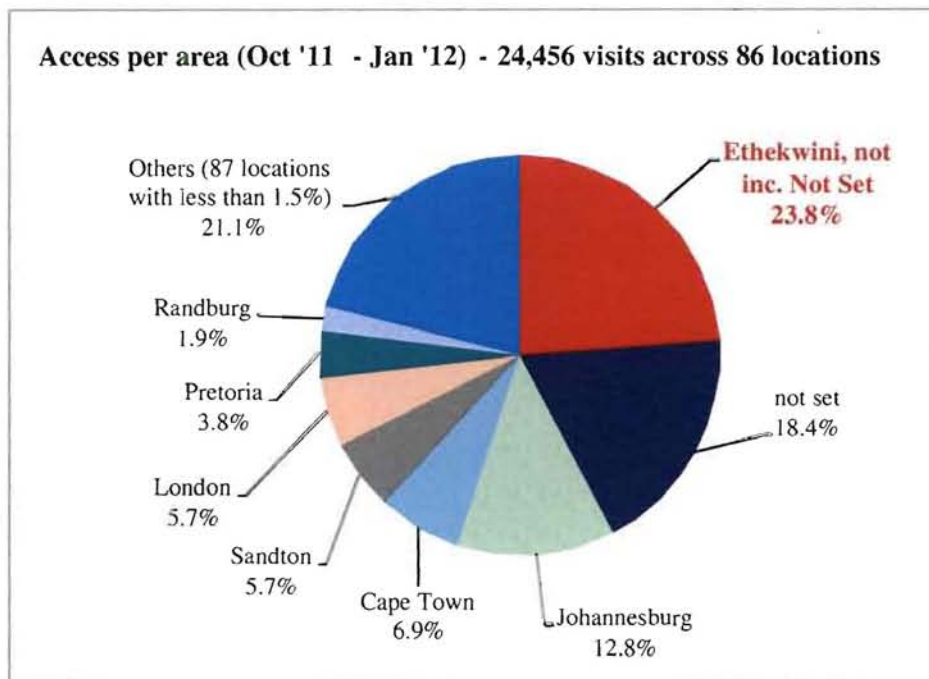
FIG. 2 Minimum and maximum number of users in eThekweni Municipality (Oct 2010 – Jan 2011). Source: Google Analytics.





Usage statistics from October 2010 to January 2011 (Figure 2) reveal that the total number of visitors increased by just under a quarter – an increase from 9345 to 12464 unique visits. But Umkomaas and Umlazi did not feature in the top 100 locations at all. The number of users accessing the Ulwazi Wiki from Pinetown dropped by half to 90 visits or 0.7% of the total. However, during this same period, the number of South African users who were accessing the Ulwazi Wiki from within the municipality increased, with figures showing a minimum of 4087 visitors (32.8% of the total) and a maximum of 5169 (41.5%).

FIG. 3 Minimum and maximum number of users in eThekweni Municipality (Oct 2011 – Jan 2012). Source: Google Analytics.



During the period from October 2011 to January 2012 (Figure 3), Umkomaas and Umlazi again did not feature in the top 100 locations, Pinetown rose to 284 visits or 1.2%. Generally, if we exclude the variable 'not set' from eThekweni, there is a fall in the minimum number of users within the municipality to 5876 of a total of 24456 visitors (24.1% of the total) and conversely, if we include it, an increase to 10427 visitors (42.7%) as the potential maximum. The difference between the two can be attributed to the greater variable of 'not set', which was 18.7% compared to 8.7% and 4.9% for the previous two years respectively. Could the reason for the marked increase in the variable 'not set' have been an increase in users accessing the Ulwazi Wiki from their cell phones?

#### *Mobile access*

According to the Ulwazi website, mobile access to the wiki has been available since the beginning of October 2010:

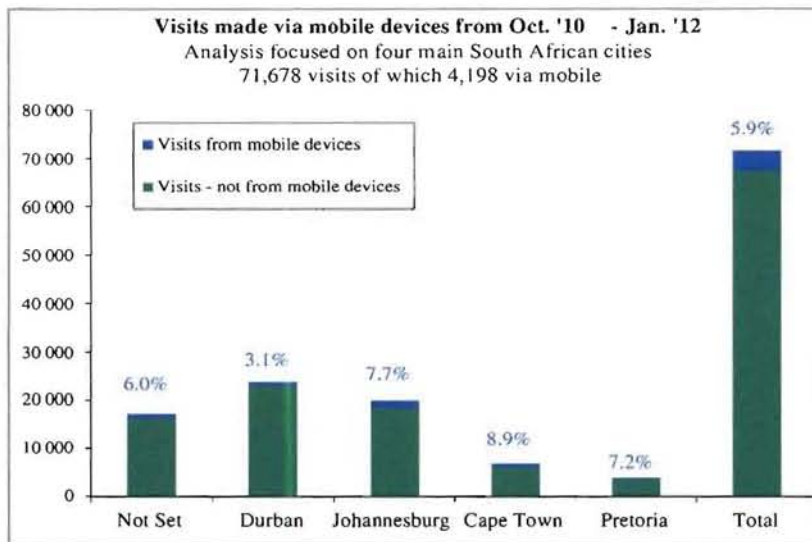
If the knowledge and stories we collect are to be relevant to the communities we serve, then this information needs to be accessible through mobile devices. Not everyone has a computer with access to the internet but most people have access to a cellphone, which now come standard with a browser. With this in mind, we have developed Wap-enabled, mobile-friendly versions of our website, blog and wiki that are accessible and usable from a cellphone. (Ulwazi Programme, 2010)

Through the introduction of mobile functionality to the Ulwazi Wiki, the programme aimed to improve access to the wiki for the communities contained within the borders of the eThekweni Municipality. However, mobile statistics from October 2010 (when the Ulwazi Wiki was optimised for mobile web browsing) to January 2012 reveal that mobile usage within the municipality was less than in areas outside of it. Figure 4 is based on the top 25 global locations from which users were accessing the Ulwazi Wiki through mobile

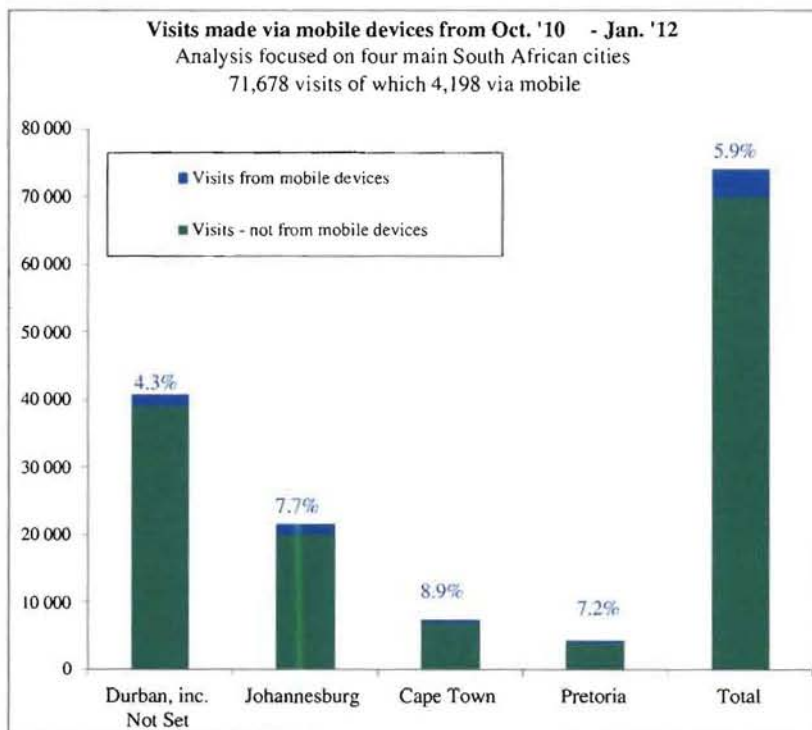
devices. The top five locations in South Africa are represented on the bar charts in Figure 4. 'Durban' subsumes various areas within the municipality such as Glenwood, Berea and Pinetown and is, as far as possible, representative of mobile users in the eThekweni Municipality. Similarly, Johannesburg comprises areas like Sandton, Hatfield, Hyde Park, Randburg, Parktown and Centurion. Figure 4 a) shows that of all the visits made to the Ulwazi Wiki from Durban during the period October 2010 – January 2012, only 3.1% were made from a mobile device, a figure of 732 out of a total of 23 731 visits. This figure fares fairly poorly in comparison to other major cities during the same period. Johannesburg recorded a 7.7% average of mobile users (1536 mobile visits out of a total of 20 010) and Cape Town, which had an 8.9% average of mobile users (615 mobile visits out of a total of 6 878). The 'not set' mobile statistics show 1027 mobile visits out of a total of 17052, an average of 6% of the total visits for this category. If we assign the value 'not set' to Durban (eThekweni Municipality), the average increases slightly to 4.3% but is still below the national average of 5.9% and the average of other cities like Johannesburg, Cape Town and Pretoria with 7.7%, 8.9% and 7.2% respectively.

FIG. 4 Users accessing Ulwazi Wiki via mobile device (Oct 2010 – Jan 2012). Source: Google Analytics.

a)

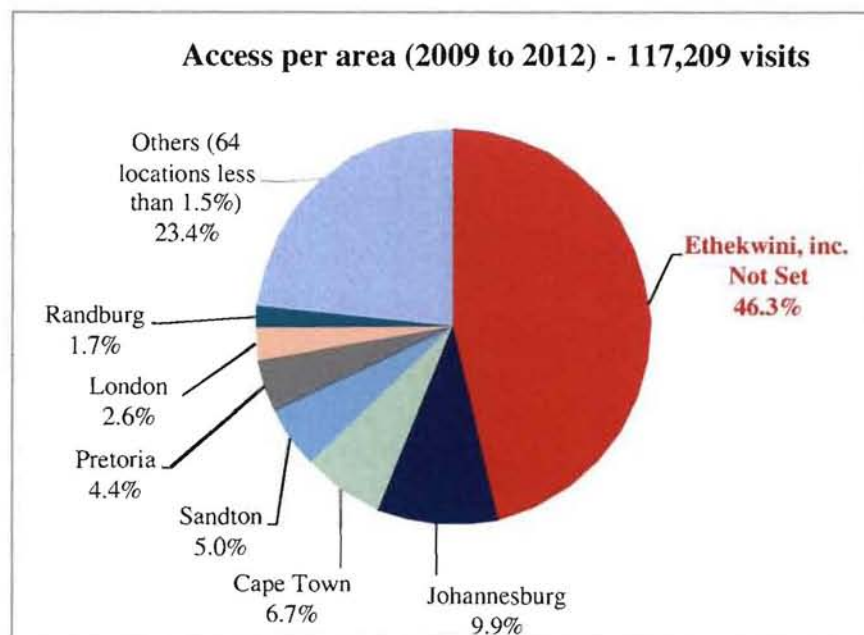
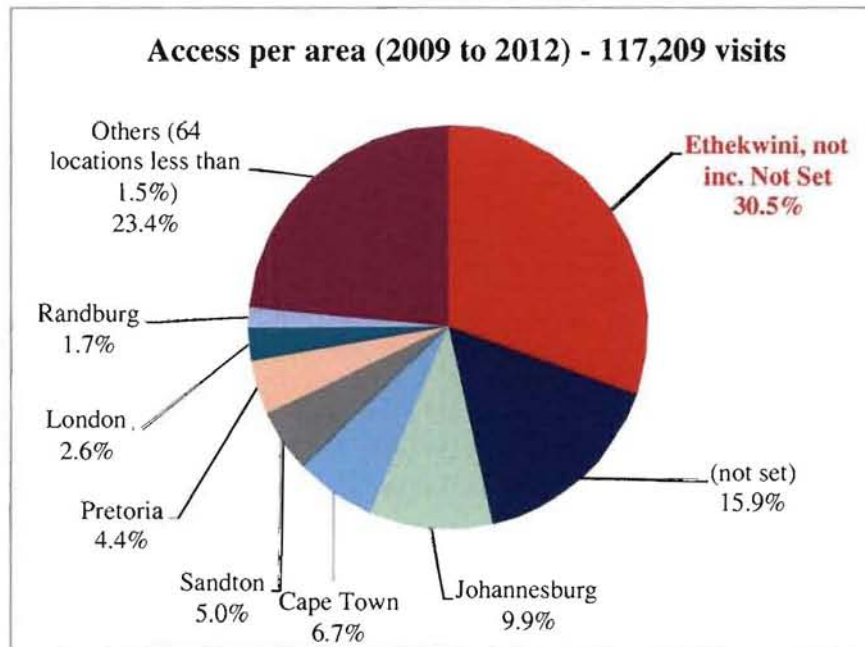


b)



In contrast to the figures of mobile users, overall statistics reveal that the number of users accessing the Ulwazi Wiki from within the municipality has increased considerably in the past few years (see Figure 5). Of a total of 117209 visits, from October 2009 to January 2012, at least about one third, 35710 visitors or 30.5% (the same maximum of municipal users from October 2009 – January 2010, see Figure 1) and at most 54299 (46.5%), of the users were located within the eThekwinini municipal area.

FIG. 5 Minimum and maximum number of all users in eThekweni Municipality (Oct 2009 – Jan 2012). Source: Google Analytics.



Behavioural trends further suggest that users within the municipality are accessing the site more consistently than those outside of it. In all of the cases of the top ten user locations, a higher percentage of visitors from outside the municipality were 'new visitors' and not 'returning visitors' (see Figure 6). The ratio of new to returning visitors is 8.10 vs. 7.34% (Johannesburg), 5.46 vs. 4.73% (Cape Town) and 3.64 vs. 2.74% (Pretoria) respectively. This suggests that users from outside the municipality were accessing the Ulwazi Wiki indirectly or inadvertently, through referrals from other websites or through the results of search engines like Google. When they arrived at the Ulwazi Wiki, they did not find what they were looking for and therefore did not return to the website. On the contrary, areas within the municipality such as Durban, Berea, Glenwood and potentially 'not set', all showed a higher percentage of returning visitors than new visitors (Durban: 21.36 vs. 10.52%, Berea: 7.26 vs. 4.61%, Glenwood: 7.30 vs. 3.56%, 'not set': 14.62 vs. 11.96%). These figures imply that users within the municipality see the Ulwazi Wiki as a worthwhile resource and are returning to use it.



FIG. 6 Top ten new vs. returning visitors (October 2009 – January 2012). Source: Google Analytics.

City	Visits	% Visits
(not set)		
New Visitors	13,849	11.95%
Returning Visitors	4,644	14.62%
Durban		
New Visitors	12,175	10.52%
Returning Visitors	6,785	21.36%
Johannesburg		
New Visitors	9,382	8.10%
Returning Visitors	2,332	7.34%
Cape Town		
New Visitors	6,322	5.46%
Returning Visitors	1,502	4.73%
Berea		
New Visitors	5,333	4.61%
Returning Visitors	2,306	7.26%
Sandton		
New Visitors	4,659	4.02%
Returning Visitors	1,144	3.60%
Pretoria		
New Visitors	4,213	3.64%
Returning Visitors	972	2.74%
Glenwood		
New Visitors	4,123	3.56%
Returning Visitors	2,319	7.30%
London		
New Visitors	2,663	2.30%
Returning Visitors	488	1.54%
Randburg		
New Visitors	1,747	1.51%
Returning Visitors	362	1.14%

The above statistics and discussion point to the increasing circulation and sharing of local content on the Ulwazi Programme within the borders of the municipality. However, the low number of registered users and contributions from those other than the fieldworkers and core Ulwazi Programme team suggested minimal usage of the programme by 'local

communities' in the areas in which the Ulwazi Programme operates.

### *Processes*

A closer look at the Ulwazi Programme's processes reveals much about what the programme claims to do and how it really operates – the former, its proposed, democratised model, the latter showing a greater degree of 'top-down' infrastructure.

These processes can be divided into three stages:

- Framing – determining the object of inquiry, what is considered indigenous knowledge and therefore should be collected by fieldworkers.
- Collection – the process by which fieldworkers source and collect content they feel is relevant.
- Submission – the submission of content onto the Ulwazi Wiki and editing of that content.

### *Framing – what constitutes indigenous knowledge?*

The Ulwazi Programme is run through the eThekweni Municipality and as such, one might expect the municipality to frame it in a particular way and prioritise what it feels should be collected and by whom. With limited knowledge of the communities in which the Ulwazi Programme was active, and not wanting to stifle fieldworkers' enthusiasm, the Programme Leader explained that she did not want to be prescriptive about what was collected. In an interview she suggested that content could include: "...arts, crafts, science, history, the environment... The only limitation is that it must be relevant for the eThekweni community. eThekweni Municipality is funding the project so the term 'local indigenous knowledge' must apply to denote the boundaries of eThekweni." However, the Programme Leader felt that fieldworkers needed guidance: "We need to give them some direction in terms of themes that would be interesting and that they can pursue and develop...they are young people with little life experience so they need themes to help

them.” (Programme Leader, interview, 2009 October 08) Themes for 2010, which were also chosen to publicise the Ulwazi Programme website and direct traffic to it, included the history of soccer in local communities to coincide with the 2010 FIFA World Cup and the history of Indians in KwaZulu-Natal, as the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of indentured labourers to Natal was in 2010. Other themes included the brewing of *umqombothi* (a type of beer) and the Zulu names of plants (Zanele Shange, interview, 2009 October 16).

Categorisation and training also contributed to the way in which the concept of indigenous knowledge was presented to the fieldworkers. At its inception, the Programme Leader, a municipal librarian and the Digital Media Consultant created categories, loosely based on library cataloguing systems, in order to classify the content that was submitted. According to the Digital Media Consultant this system has developed in a fairly organic way and registered users are able to create their own categories if they consider the existing ones to be inadequate. When new categories are created, the Ulwazi Programme duplicates these in English and Zulu (digital media consultant, interview, 2012 March 02). During initial training, fieldworkers were given step-by-step guidelines exemplifying the type of submissions that were expected of them. When I asked fieldworkers from Umbumbulu how they decided what content was worth collecting and putting onto the Ulwazi Wiki, fieldworker, Bongiwe Ndlovu, cited clear guidance from the Programme Leader, “she guides us as to what we must collect... she briefs us on things that are needed for the site.” (Bongiwe Ndlovu, interview, 2009 October 16) Fieldworker, Zanele Shange, felt that the three broad categories of History, Culture,

Environment sufficed (Zanele Shange, interview, 2009 October 16). While a difference of opinion on direct guidance may have been apparent, as we will see, their interpretation of the programme mandate seemed quite similar – to collect and preserve traditional culture and the knowledge of elders for future generations before it was lost.

In detailing the objectives of the Ulwazi Programme in a co-authored article, the Programme Leader writes:

indigenous knowledge faces extinction unless it is properly documented and disseminated. The programme described here enables communities to preserve and manage their own local knowledge in an economically viable and sustainable manner and so create a legacy for future generations. (Greyling and Zulu, 2010: 31)

It is important to note the Programme Leader's interpretation of the indigenous. In official publications, like the one from which the above excerpt is taken, she embraces the broad and encompassing view of an 'indigenous knowledge' that is under threat. This evokes the idea "that a 'knowledge' can be wholly 'indigenous' to 'a people' whose traditions go back into the dawn of human history without any contact with others..." (Green, 2008: 133) However, in conversation with her, I became aware of a more flexible approach to the indigenous, which, as we will see later in the chapter, is encapsulated in the ideals of the Ulwazi Programme. Her perspective on indigenous knowledge is evident in the following exchange:

Grant McNulty: What is your conception of indigeneity? Non-Western? African? Indian? Afrikaner? Length of time in South Africa?

Programme Leader: To me I had a problem with the categorisation of indigenous knowledge as African knowledge because I am also an African. My knowledge is just as valid as indigenous knowledge. I do not come from Europe even if my forebears did. My knowledge has originated here. The term non-Western is a no-no for me. The Indian people having been born and bred here, they are part of the local

people. I regard their knowledge as just as indigenous as my own or the African peoples. I know it is not the popular definition of indigenous knowledge but to me, for the purposes of Ulwazi, we would be exclusive if we did not include everybody who lives here. (Programme Leader, interview, 2009 December 12)

Moreover, in developing the Ulwazi Programme, one of her primary concerns was not indigenous knowledge but rather the longevity of the library and finding new ways to engage with changing constituencies, based on:

the fact that we had to admit that the library's clientele had dramatically changed over the last ten years, with the urbanisation and influx of people from the rural areas. They have different needs and if we do not satisfy them at the library, they go elsewhere. That was the rationale behind it. (Programme Leader, interview, 2009 December 02)

The Programme Leader explained that through the Ulwazi Programme she was interested in providing access to information as that was her brief as a librarian. She also expressed concern about "losing young people from the libraries" and saw a programme that provided locally generated content delivered via a medium that was attractive to them, namely the Internet and cell phones, as a drawcard. She felt that if the library could implement a programme that included these aspects, it would entice people back to the library (Programme Leader, interview, 2009 December 02).

Indigenous knowledge as a concept and formal policy only came to the Programme Leader once she has conceptualised the Ulwazi Programme. However, she no doubt saw synergies between what she hoped to achieve with the programme and the mandate for museums and libraries, as detailed in the national Indigenous Knowledge Systems Policy, which calls for "opportunities for indigenous and local communities to actively record and share their contemporary history, culture and language." (Department of Science and

Technology, 2005: 33) The above extracts illuminate the multiple interpretations, and applications in different contexts, of a broad conceptual category like indigenous knowledge. For the Programme Leader, indigenous or local knowledge was defined geographically by the boundaries of the eThekweni Municipality, was a category that was informed by government policy but that also had the potential to be inclusive. Lesley Green (2008: 132) writes: “the discourse on ‘indigenous knowledge’ is heavily influenced by social and political power.” That is, those who are in power determine the overarching meaning of what does and does not constitute indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge in South Africa formed part of Mbeki’s ‘African Renaissance’ initiative and was promoted as an authentic, local inheritance with ‘African’ positioned in contrast to ‘Western’ and exclusive of so-called ‘Whites’ and ‘Coloureds’. For example, Green discusses historical communities of ‘Coloured’ fisherman whose practices are not considered indigenous knowledge (133, 135).

In more recent times, during Zuma’s presidency, indigenous knowledge has been called upon to address socio-economic issues as evidenced by the lead programme on Indigenous Knowledge Systems, which has implemented the National Recordal System, the aim of which “is to record, document, preserve, protect, and promote IK [indigenous knowledge] and to secure the legal rights of IK holders where appropriate” (Alberts, Khalala and Molefe, 2011: 17) Whereas the Ulwazi Programme’s focus is the collection and circulation of local knowledge, the National Recordal System comprises a complex information architecture that focuses on “capturing”, “managing” and conducting “scientific research” on indigenous knowledge with very little scope for its circulation

amongst the communities from which it was collected. Rather, the National Indigenous Knowledge Systems Office is concerned with bio-prospecting and developing commercial products for socio-economic upliftment of “indigenous knowledge holders” (Alberts, Khalala and Molefe, 2011; Fogwill *et al* 2011).

The Ulwazi Programme’s framing of indigenous knowledge is characterised by the (mainly ‘traditional’) knowledge of the older generation, underpinned by an urgency of preservation. With regards to communities in areas around Durban, the Programme Leader saw a “falling apart of the older societal structures because of the lack of transferring this knowledge from the older to the younger generation.” (Programme Leader, interview, 2009 October 08) At the October 2009 fieldworker review meeting, she reiterated the importance of the knowledge of the older generation by telling two of the four fieldworkers submitting content to the Ulwazi Wiki to, “chat with old people and get their stories...” Similarly, at the following month’s staff meeting in November 2009, one of the fieldworkers had conducted an interview with a contractor working on the new Moses Mabhida Stadium, built in preparation for the 2010 Soccer World Cup. The Programme Leader thought that this was “modern stuff” and therefore unsuitable for inclusion on the Ulwazi Wiki, which is dominated by traditional Zulu content. She felt the submission should feature in the ‘News’ or blog section of the Ulwazi website. This example is interesting in that it shows how a governmentally informed notion of indigenous knowledge intersected uneasily with that of a fieldworker who, in terms of the National Recordal System, could be an indigenous knowledge holder. It should be noted that this submission was proffered during the formative period of the programme from a

fieldworker who, at that stage, had received little training and would therefore have less of a conception of the programme's notion of indigenous knowledge.

The English and Zulu pamphlet that was circulated to the public in order to explain what the programme collected also alluded to the knowledge of the older generation and traditional Zulu culture. Collected content was described as “music, dance, performances, traditional Zulu folktales, children's stories, games, personal stories, photographs of beadwork, clothing or anything that the communities think is important to collect and preserve...” (Ulwazi Programme, 2009) The division of indigenous knowledge into the three categories of History, Culture and Environment, and the choice of these particular three categories was, in itself, quite determining and shaping of the content. Indigenous knowledge was seen as related to a distant past that somehow transcended time and was connected, or relevant to the present, a bounded indigenous ‘culture’, and also linked to indigenous people's natural knowledge of, and engagement with, plants and the natural environment. The latter category, in particular, relates to the government's ongoing aspirations (through NIKSO) to use indigenous knowledge of medicinal plants as a means of socio-economic upliftment. Although the Programme Leader has a more flexible approach to indigenous knowledge, a particular notion of indigenous knowledge – traditional culture within municipal boundaries – was, and continues to be, presented to fieldworkers as valuable and worthy of collection. With this framing, the Ulwazi Programme displays clear signs of both the preservatory and exhibitionary aspects of curation. In part, it is custodial as it is concerned with the preservation of materials relating to the past. However, by giving the fieldworkers a clear object of inquiry, the



programme selectively collects, or rather, curates, what is and is not included and presented on the Ulwazi Wiki. What is collected is also subject to further mediation through categorisation and meaning making in the ordering and exhibition, or public presentation, of collected materials.

### *Collection*

The Ulwazi Programme's mandate has resulted in a very specific vision of what should be collected by fieldworkers – traditional culture and the knowledge of the older generation. This was evidenced by the Umbumbulu fieldworkers' collected content submitted at the October 2009 staff meeting, which, except for submissions on two local events, comprised traditional clothing, the *isigubhu* (a traditional drum), *lobola* or bridewealth negotiations, traditional food and how to make 'Zulu' steam bread, the names of cows used to pay bridewealth, *magalobha*, presented as an indigenous game and traditional women's work (fetching water from the river). The November 2009 and January 2010 meetings yielded similar submissions, including a recipe for brewing sorghum beer, Zulu folktales, children's stories and poems, herbal remedies and *umhlonyane*, a traditional rite of passage for girls reaching womanhood that entails a cleansing ritual (the application and washing off of white soil), the wearing of traditional dress and beadwork and which culminates in a ceremony involving traditional songs, food and gift-giving. Over a one-year period, from October 2009 to October 2010, only 23% of contributions from Fieldworker, Bongiwe Ndlovu, and 37% from Fieldworker, Zanele Shange, related to people, groups and histories of Umbumbulu. The vast majority dealt with more generic Zulu traditions and culture. Discussions with the fieldworkers

from Umbumbulu on what the Ulwazi Programme does also revealed a bent towards traditional culture and preservation. Bongiwe Ndlovu felt: “The Ulwazi Programme encourages traditions to be protected for a long time so that even the kids who are growing up now will be able to learn about what is collected...” (Bongiwe Ndlovu, interview, 2009 October 16). In Zanele Shange’s opinion, it is a programme that collects knowledge in rural areas and townships, which is put on the Ulwazi Wiki to share “...and to make sure that when the older people die, this knowledge will be continually preserved and available on the website.” (Zanele Shange, interview, 2009 October 16)

The programme’s framing was also prevalent in Umbumbulu fieldworkers’ interaction with their local communities. In interviews about collecting content for the Ulwazi Wiki, both fieldworkers cited a close-knit community in which they could exploit local networks (family, friends, neighbours) to source relevant content. Yet, both also made reference to traditional culture and the knowledge of the older generation, as is evident in the following excerpts:

*Fieldworker Zanele Shange:*

If we are looking for something to collect... Something important like *inganekwane* [a folktale], we know that grannies will pass away and we will have no-one to tell them... So we must record them now while they are still alive... To protect them. So we know that if you want an *inganekwane*, you can go to the Ulwazi website and look under the *inganekwane* category.

Because I live in Umbumbulu, I know what is happening there. That is why it is easy to collect there because I know many people who live there who have information, stories... I know most of the people. I know that if there is an old man of 60 years plus, I believe he will be able to tell me about the history of the area, as he is old...” (Zanele Shange, interview, 2009 October 16)

*Fieldworker Bongiwe Ndlovu:*

Older people are very happy to have this project as they think it is important for the next generation, because in the future people won't know how to do these things [craftwork] and it will be necessary in future...The knowledge about these things. (Bongiwe Ndlovu, interview, 2009 October 16)

The content collected by the Umbumbulu fieldworkers cannot simply be seen as shaped by the Programme Leader's instructions or the programme's mandate. It is also necessary to consider the fieldworkers' backgrounds, frames of reference and how these influenced their selection processes.

*Fieldworker Bongiwe Ndlovu*

Bongiwe Ndlovu, born in 1980, is a 32-year old woman who grew up in the Etsheni area in the Sobonakhona (Makhanya) traditional authority area of Umbumbulu. She has a diploma in Office Management and Technology from Mangosuthu Technikon. She is the second youngest of a family of seven children. A close-knit community was something that was important in her childhood and, she explained, was central to her adult life. In her spare time she revealed that she enjoyed going to *amagigi* (neighbourhood / community events and celebrations) and she cited her family and neighbours as an integral part of her life:

If you don't have a family it is not easy to live. You feel lonely if you don't have one and they support me in everything...If you have a problem, they [neighbours] will come to your house and help with whatever they can. There is still *ubuntu* (humanity) in my neighbourhood. Like yesterday, it was my neighbour's funeral. He was sick and was buried yesterday. A very poor family contributed food to the family who had lost the member of their family. It is easy to tell a neighbour your problem there. (Bongiwe Ndlovu, interview, 2009 October 16)

Bongiwe Ndlovu is also a Shembeite, a member of the Nazareth Baptist Church of Shembe, an African Independent Church that promotes synthesis between Christianity based on the Old Testament and traditional Zulu customs. She felt that traditional customs such as ritual slaughtering of animals to communicate with the *amadlozi* (ancestors) and rites of passage dealing with womanhood such as *umhlonyane* and *umemulo* were still relevant and practised in her area.

*Fieldworker Zanele Shange*

Zanele Shange, also born in 1980, is 32-year old woman who grew up in Empandwini in the Embo-Nkasa traditional authority area of Umbumbulu. She has a diploma in Commercial Practice from Mangosuthu Technikon. She is the youngest of a family of eight children and when I met with her, she recounted childhood memories of playing games with neighbourhood children, collecting wood in the forest and water from the river. Like Bongiwe Ndlovu, she is also a Shembeite and she cited her faith as important, “sometimes life is difficult, it helps to pray and believe in God. I pray in the morning and at night before I go to bed and thank God for protecting me.” (Zanele Shange, interview, 2009 October 16) In her spare time, she said that she liked to go to church to sing and pray, and also to spend time with her family, mainly her young child and her father who raised her as a single parent. When I asked her about the relevance of cultural traditions, Zanele Shange responded:

They are still as important as ever. Life has changed these days but at home we still slaughter for the *amadlozi* and burn *imphepho*<sup>1</sup> to communicate with them. It is necessary...it's important to respect and honour them. (Zanele Shange, interview, 2009 October 16)

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<sup>1</sup> *Imphepho* or *Helichrysum Odoratissimum*, is a dried herb that is burnt when communicating with the ancestors.

These insights into the Umbumbulu fieldworkers' lives suggest that what they considered important in their lives (family, traditions, a close-knit community, respect for the knowledge of elders) was in line with the Ulwazi Programme's collection mandate and the Programme Leader's guidelines, all of which have contributed to the proliferation of traditional Zulu content on the Ulwazi Wiki.

#### *Submission of Content and Power Relations*

Archival efforts are seldom innocent of questions of power as there is often much at stake regarding what is remembered, what is recorded and what is not. Although the Ulwazi Programme champions a democratised, grassroots model for community heritage, there are discernible hierarchies of power in place, notably in the top-down institutional framing of the programme. In the first instance, this is evidenced by the policies (discussed above) that were adhered to in order to secure funding for the programme. By following the eThekweni Municipality's IDP and subsequently becoming a municipal project, the Ulwazi Programme has adopted the city's heritage mandate, priorities and politics and must operate within these parameters, collecting material that pertains to the greater municipal area. These mandates and policies have been carefully crafted to fulfil political goals, albeit with strong developmental and redress aspirations.

Staff members were committed to the ideal of democratic participation and strove to create an enabling environment in which this might occur. The Programme Leader set the terms of indigenous knowledge for the Ulwazi Programme. At monthly fieldworker meetings, her notion of indigenous knowledge was re-iterated and she accepted or

rejected submissions for inclusion on the Ulwazi Wiki. Fieldworkers were not paid for submissions that the Programme Leader did not consider to be indigenous knowledge. The internal structure of the Ulwazi Programme has its own hierarchy, which determines how the Ulwazi Wiki is written and rewritten. Initial limitations were set as to what constitutes indigenous knowledge but content collected by the fieldworkers and submitted as articles was susceptible to further layers of review and editing. Articles that were deemed inadequate, required further attention, added information or photographs, were highlighted with a blue warning box. These edits generally consisted of adding pictures or English and Zulu summaries. Improved formatting and hyperlinks to external websites were seen as integral to improve the Ulwazi Wiki's searchability and to generate more Internet traffic to the website. As a result, fieldworkers were given training and guidelines as to how content should be presented on the Ulwazi Wiki, including sessions on "Writing for the Web" and a "Copy Writing and Editing Style Guide". The Digital Content Manager and the Programme Leader made further changes, including correcting bad grammar and phrasing, editing content that was badly categorised or incorrectly formatted, as well as adding more detail to submissions such as captions to images, internal and external links and summaries. They also have the permission to delete whole pages if they consider them to be irrelevant.

The "Special Pages" of the wiki offer a history of all revisions that have been made. The five most revised pages pertaining to Umbumbulu showed that either the Programme Leader or the Digital Content Manager was the last editor of the latest versions. Interestingly, the Digital Content Manager, Mabusi Kgwete, often wielded more

influence than the Programme Leader as she is bilingual (she speaks Zulu and English) and therefore checks, edits and approves a higher percentage of the Zulu content than the Programme Leader who speaks English and Afrikaans. The fieldworkers' original submissions are thus marked to varying degrees by the worldviews, scrutiny and red pens of the Digital Content Manager and Programme Leader. As record-makers, they are far from neutral but rather "political players; active participants in the dynamics of power relations" where the "boundary between constructive and oppressive power is always shifting and porous" (Harris, 2007: 241). Here, Derrida's archontic power is at play. Through the process of editing, the Digital Content Manager and Programme Leader act as archons, those who command and control archived materials and have the archontic power to interpret the archive (Derrida, 1996: 2). The potential is great for these archons to perform large scale editing and significantly to control what is and is not said. Interestingly, this power was not abused and instead of major edits, I encountered slighter, subtle modifications to the fieldworkers' submissions. Importantly, as we shall see, content that was not envisaged by the programme also managed to surface in the submissions, and real social issues emerged within the overarching frame of 'indigenous knowledge'.

In what follows I carry out a close analysis of the three most revised pages pertaining to Umbumbulu, initially written by a fieldworker, namely "The kraal" (29 revisions), "Umbumbulu Magistrate Court" (27 revisions) and "Zamazama Project" (19 revisions). I do this in order to determine the extent to which others edited the fieldworkers' original submissions. I have included the original formatting and spelling errors as they are found

on the Ulwazi Wiki. Where I intervene in the text, I do so in square brackets. In all of the examples, the editing follows the Ulwazi Programme's pecking order. Fieldworkers submitted the original article and edited it once or twice, following which the Programme Leader or the Digital Content Manager made changes.

### *The Kraal*

The twenty-ninth edit of "The kraal" (an enclosure for livestock), last edited on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2012, differs in various respects from the first, created by a fieldworker on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2009. The English is noticeably better, the article is divided into sections, has a list of contents, a Zulu summary, includes an image and internal hyperlinks. It also features more detailed categorisation as well as user-generated categories, in this case, the addition in Zulu of *izilwane ezifuyiwe*, *ikhaya*, *izilwane*, *imiphakathi*, *imicimbi yesintu* and *lobola*, which have been translated into English as farm animals, home, animals and communities, traditional ceremonies (see Figures 7 and 8). Although the later version is more readable, the core language of the text remains largely the same as in the first and interim versions, as does the Zulu summary, which I translate below.

#### *Version 1 (fieldworker 07/09/09):*

This is a house in a home where cattles are kept. It is made with woods, you collect woods joined them together, make a circle to build a kraal. They must be a door where cows comes in and goes out that door is called (isango). The door (isango) must be on the side of the home where people use to enter. The cattles sleep inside the kraal when it is not raining. The kraal is build at the centre of a home. When it is cold or raining they sleep outside under the trees where they cannot get cold and rain easy.

The kraal is built at Zulu's home which shows that the owner of the home of which is the head of the family, the father has got what it take or have Qualities of being a man a real Zulu man. A Zulu man must have many cows, goat and chickens then



you become a respected man in the area, and you can have words in mans gatherings or meetings. It is important to have cows when you are a man because we as AmaZulu [Zulu people] we use cows for many different reasons, like sloting [sic – slaughtering] of a cow when there is a feast, anniversaries and weddings. When we do lobola [bridewealth] negotiations we use cows to pay for lobola. We also use cow's skin to make (isidwaba) for women and (ibheshu) for mans to ware. The kraal is a very respected place in a family because this is where ncestors [sic] stays. Not anyone is allowed to enter the kraal, this is a place where no rubbish or dirty things needed, it is kept pour [sic – pure] clean. You take shoes off when entering the kraal to show respect. In zulu culture we respect elders and those who died,because we believe that they look up for us and they need respect from us so they will give us luck.

*Version 29 (10/01/12):*

A kraal which is called isibaya in a South African isiZulu language. It is a structure made of logs in a Zulu homestead it used to keep the cows. The kraal is built in the middle of the homestead. The woods or logs to build the kraal are collected and joined together to form a circle with a gate. The gate faces the main entrance of the homestead so that people can have easy access to the kraal. The cows sleep inside the kraal when it is not raining and when it is cold or raining the cattle sleep outside of the kraal, under trees to protect themselves from the rain or the cold.

### **Contents**

- 1 Pride of the Zulu's
- 2 Lobola
- 3 Highly respected
- 4 IsiZulu Sumniary

### **Pride of the Zulu's**

The kraal is built to show that the father, who is the owner of the land, and head of the family is a real Zulu man. A man has to have many cows, goats, and chickens in order to be a respected in his community. Ownership of lots of cattle entitles him to speak and be listened too when there are gatherings or meetings. It is important to the Zulus for a man to have cattles for slaughtering when there is a traditional ceremony, funeral or a wedding.

### **Lobola [internal hyperlink]**

During lobola [internal hyperlink] (bride price) negotiations cows are used as a form of payments. Although now, money is also used. The skin of the cow is used to make traditional skirts [internal link] (isidwaba) for women, and loin cloth [internal link] (ibheshu) for men to wear.

### **Highly respected**

The kraal is a highly respected place in the homestead because this is where it is believed that the ancestors live. Only certain family members are allowed to enter


the kraal. It should be kept clean and pure. Shoes are to be taken off when entering the kraal to show respect. In Zulu culture the elders and those who have died are highly respected. It is believed the ancestors (amadlozi) look after the people that are still living and give them good luck.

### **IsiZulu Summary**

Isibaya siyigugu emzini womnumzane ngoba sikhombisa ukuthi indoda inezinkomo ezingakhi. Sakhiwe maphakathi nomuzi ngezinkuni kuthi isango laso libheke isango lomuzi. Isibaya yindawo lapho kugcinwa khona izinkomo. Kunenkolelo yokuthi ukuba nemfuyo eningi kunika umnumzane indawo emphakathini yokubeka umbono nokuhlonishwa ngenxa yemfuyo yakhe. Isibaya siyindawo ehlonishwa kakhulu ekhaya ngoba kunenkolelo yokuthi amadlozi ahlala khona. Akusibo bonke abantu abangena esibayeni. Kunemithetho yakhona.

[The kraal is valuable in the man's homestead as it shows that he has many cows. It is built inside the homestead from wood so that the gate of the kraal faces that of the homestead. The kraal is a place that is full of cows. It is believed that having many livestock gives a man an elevated position in the community and he is respected because of his livestock. The kraal is a place that is greatly respected in the home because it is believed that the ancestors live there. Not everyone can enter the kraal. There are laws governing it.]

FIG. 7 "The Kraal" original version



**ULWAZI**  
SHARING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

[Ulwazi Home](#) [Community Memory](#) [Play Games](#) [Our Blog](#) [Research & Publications](#) [About Us](#) [Contact](#)

[Page](#) [Discussion](#) [Edit](#) [History](#) [Watch](#)  
modified 19:7 September 2009 at 10:29 -- 3.57k views

## The kraal

Revision as of 10:26, 7 September 2009 by Ndlovubp ([Talk](#) | [contribs](#))  
([diff](#)) ← [Older revision](#) | [Latest revision](#) ([diff](#)) | [Newer revision](#) → ([diff](#))

### THE KRAAL (ISIBAYA)

This is a house in a home where cattles are kept. It is made with woods, you collect woods joined them together , make a circle to build a kraal. They must be a door where cows comes in and goes out that door is called (isango). The door (isango) must be on the side of the home where people use to enter. The cattles sleep inside the kraal when it is not raining. The kraal is build at the centre of a home. When it is cold or raining they sleep outside under the trees where they cannot get cold and rain easy.

The kraal is built at Zulu's home which shows that the owner of the home of which is the head of the family, the father has got what it take or have Qualities of being a man a real Zulu man.

A Zulu man must have many cows, goat and chickens then you become a respected man in the area, and you can have words in mans gatherings or meetings. It is important to have cows when you are a man because we as AmaZulu we use cows for many different reasons, like sloting of a cow when there is a feast ,Anniversaries and weddings, When we do lobola negotiations we use cows to pay for lobola. We also use cow's skin to make (isidwaba) for women and (ibheshu) for mans to ware.

The kraal is a very respected place in a family because this is where ancistors stays. Not anyone is allowed to enter the kraal, this is a place where no rubbish or dirty things needed, it is kept pour clean. You take shoes off when entering the kraal to show respect. In zulu culture we respect elders and those who died, because we believe that they look up for us and they need respect from us so they will give us luck.

Category: Environment

FIG. 8 “The Kraal” edited version

## The kraal

Revision as of 08:57, 10 January 2012 by [Greylingb](#) (Talk | contribs) (diff) ← Older revision | Latest revision (diff) | Newer revision → (diff)

A kraal which is called *isibaya* in a South African isiZulu language. It is a structure made of logs in a Zulu homestead it used to keep the cows. The kraal is built in the middle of the homestead.


The woods or logs to build the kraal are collected and joined together to form a circle with a gate. The gate faces the main entrance of the homestead so that people from the can have easy access to the kraal. The cows sleep inside the kraal when it is not raining and when it is cold or raining the cattle sleep outside of the kraal, under trees to protect themselves from the rain or the cold.

**Contents** [hide]

- 1 [Pride of the Zulu's](#)
- 2 [Lobola](#)
- 3 [Highly respected](#)
- 4 [IsiZulu Summary](#)

**Pride of the Zulu's**

The kraal is built to show that the father, who is the owner of the land, and head of the family is a real Zulu man. A man has to have many cows, goats, and chickens in order to be a respected in his community. Ownership of lots of cattle entitles him to speak and be listened too when there are gatherings or meetings. It is important to the Zulus for a man to have cattles for slaughtering when there is a traditional ceremony, funeral or a wedding.



edit This is a place where the cattles sleep

**Lobola**

During *lobola* (bride price) negotiations cows are used as a form of payments. Although now, money is also used. The skin of the cow is used to make traditional skirts (*isidwaba*) for women, and *loin cloth* (*ibheshu*) for men to wear.

**Highly respected**

The kraal is a highly respected place in the homestead because this is where it is believed that the ancestors live. Only certain family members are allowed to enter the kraal. It should be kept clean and pure. Shoes are to be taken off when entering the kraal to show respect. In Zulu culture the elders and and those who have died are highly respected. It is believed the ancestors (*amadlozi*) look after the people that are still living and give them good luck.

**IsiZulu Summary**

Isibaya siyigugu emzini womnumzane ngoba sikhombisa ukuthi indoda inezinkomo ezingakhi. Sakhiwe maphakathi nomuzi ngezinkuni kuthi isango laso libheke isango lomuzi. Isibaya yindawo lapho kugcinwa khona izinkomo. Kunenkolelo yokuthi ukuba nemfuyo eningi kunika umnumzane indawo emphakathini yokubeka umbono nokuhlonyiswa ngenxa yemfuyo yakhe. Isibaya siyindawo ehlonishwa kakhulu ekhaya ngoba kunenkolelo yokuthi amadlozi ahlala khona. Akusibo bonke abantu abangena esibayeni. Kunemithetho yakhona.

Categories: [Farm animals](#) | [IsiZwane ezifuyiwe](#) | [Home](#) | [Ikhaya](#) | [Animals](#) | [IsiZwane](#) | [Communities](#) | [Imiphakathi](#) | [Traditional Ceremonies](#) | [Imicimbi yesintu](#) | [Lobola](#)

While the English is noticeably better in the later version, there does not seem to be much difference in meaning in the two versions. Except for some discernment or doubt, perhaps due to the external editing, with regard to the ancestors' presence in the kraal, the same vocabulary is used, including cultural-specific terminology such as “father” (a literal translation of *ubaba*, a Zulu term of respect for a man) and encompassing phrases like “Pride of the Zulu's” (added in the later version) and “real Zulu man”, retained from the first version. While the Zulu summary contains Zulu-specific terminology such as descriptions like, “Isibaya siyigugu emzini womnumzane...” meaning “The kraal is the

jewel / treasure / valuable in the man's homestead...", for the most part, it provides a brief and explanatory translation that is truthful to the English original, including the scepticism regarding the place of the ancestors in the kraal, "kunenkolelo yokuthi amadlozi ahlala khona." meaning "...it is believed that the ancestors live there."

#### *Umbumbulu Magistrate's Court*

The "Umbumbulu Magistrate Court" offers a similar scenario. Aside from improved formatting, language and grammar (except for the spelling mistakes, which are retained) and the addition of four images of the court and a Zulu summary that communicates what is written in the English article, the gist of the article and much of the vocabulary remains the same from the first to the twenty-seventh version.

*Version 1 (fieldworker, 28/05/09):*

#### **UMBUMBULU MAGISTRATE COURT OF LAW**

Umbumbulu Magistrate court of law is where people comes in and out to attend their court cases and to greet the Magistrate and ask for bail.

#### **THE REASON FOR BUILDING UMBUMBULU MAGISTRATE COURT OF LAW**

Long time ago people were fighting and killing each other. The situation was uncontrollable so the State decided to build the Police Station and the Magistrate court so that people will be arrested by the police and attend their court cases in the Magistrate court nearby the Police Station. So it was the only way to reduce crime at Umbumbulu area. Umbumbulu court is working closely with the Durban Westville Prison and that started long time ago. The Westville Prison is where prison are kept, away from the public and that jail has enough space to keep many prisoners from different places so as the prisoners from Umbumbulu. So prisoners come to Umbumbulu Magistrate court to attend their cases and just go back to Durban Westville. When the prisoner is charged he stays there till his years of inprosonment are over.



### **THE MAINTAINANCE COURT**

The court of maintainance [sic] is where you report if the father of a child doesn't want to support the child. So he is forced to support the child whether he likes or not.

### **THE BEHAVIOR OF PEOPLE TOWARDS THE COURT**

People do respect the court because they know that noise is not allowed inside the court and also weapons are not allowed. They know that the court is a respectable place it is a place of law.

*Version 27 (10/03/11):*

#### **Contents**

- 1 Umbumbulu Magistrates Court - Justice For The People
- 2 Reason For Building Umbumbulu Magistrate Court
- 3 The Maintainance Court
- 4 The Behaviour of People Towards the Court
- 5 IsiZulu Summary

#### **Umbumbulu Magistrates Court - Justice For The People**

The Umbumbulu Magistrate court is where people come in to attend their court cases and sometimes to ask the Magistrate for bail.

#### **Reason For Building Umbumbulu Magistrate Court**

Long time ago people were fighting and killing each other. The situation was so uncontrollable that the State decided to build the police station and the Magistrate court in Umbumbulu so that the people who were arrested by the police could attend their court cases in the same area. It was the only way to reduce crime at Umbumbulu area. Umbumbulu court works closely with the Durban's Westville prison where the prisoners from Umbumbulu are usually sent. Offenders from the area appear in the Umbumbulu Magistrates court to attend their cases and are usually sent to Westville prison to serve their sentence.

#### **The Maintainance Court**

The Umbumbulu Magistrate Court also has a Maintainance Court. This is where women usually go to report [sic] the fathers of their children who do not want to support their children. According to South African law, fathers do have rights and also can be instructed by the courts to take financial responsibility for their children.

#### **The Behaviour of People Towards the Court**

People respect the court because they know that noise and weapons are not allowed inside of the court are not allowed. They know that the court is a respectable; it is a place of law.

### **IsiZulu Summary**

Inkantolo yaseMbumbulu yakhiwa ngemuva kwesikhathi eside abantu bekade bebulalana. UHulumeni wabona kuyisidingo esikhulu ukuthi yakhiwe endaweni ehlala abantu. Lokhu kwalehlisa nezinga lobugebengu. Kulenkantolo kwenziwa zonke izinto eziphathelele nomthetho njengesondlo sabantwana nokunye. Inkantolo yaseMbumbulu isebenzisana kakhulu nejele laseWestville, ngoba yilapho abantu bendawo ababoshelwa khona noma baqhube izigwebo zabo. Abantu bayayihlonipha kakhulu inkantolo ngoba bayazazi nezinto ekungafanele bazenze noma baziphathe.

[The Umbumbulu Court was built after people were killing each other over a long period. The government realised that it was necessary to build it where the people lived to bring down the level of crime. The court was built to address (everything related to) the law including maintenance payments. The Umbumbulu Court is used together with the Westville Jail because that is where the people from the area who are caught, serve their sentences. The people respect the court a lot because they know the things they should not do and how they should behave.]

### *The Zamazama Project*

The submission on the “Zamazama Project” is based on a food collection and distribution project. Modifications to the “Zamazama Project” do not reveal any particular motivation or editing style. The edits between the first version and the nineteenth are largely superficial, comprising changes to language and grammar, and the addition of images and hyperlinks as in the example below:

#### *Version 1 (fieldworker): (07/12/09)*

Slindile Makhanya is a field worker at Zamazama Project which is at Umbumbulu ward 100. She started this project because there are lot of people in this area who are poor and who do not have proper shelter. She reported the issue to Mr Magwaza who is a councillor in this ward, so they discussed the issue on what need to be done to help those people. They spoke to the people from EPWP (Expanded public works) from Ethekewini municipality who deals with Vegetables gardens.

*Version 19 (15/04/10)*

Slindile Makhanya is a field worker at the Zamazama Project at Umbumbulu, Ward 100. Slindile started the Zamazama Project because there are lot of people in this area who are poor and who do not have adequate housing. She reported the issue to Mr Magwaza, the Ward Councillor and they discussed what was needed to help these people. They spoke to the people from Expanded Public Works (EPWP) [hyperlink] from eThekweni Municipality which deals with vegetable gardens.

The “ZamaZama Project” is an interesting case. In early 2010, during an initial bout of fieldwork and analysis, I tracked changes to the article and although there were numerous revisions, they were only slight. Significantly, two years later, in February 2012, the article was no longer available on the Ulwazi Wiki. The Programme Leader deleted it in December 2011, most likely as it did not fit within the Ulwazi Programme’s notion of indigenous knowledge. With the exception of this deletion, but including it until December 2011, the examples shown here suggest that although there are various levels of editing in the Ulwazi Programme, much of it is to ensure more literate, better formatted articles that are linked to other content on the Ulwazi Wiki and to external websites. The editing is so slight that the programme’s hierarchy seems not to be at play. Intriguingly, these examples also reveal subjects not envisaged by the Ulwazi Programme and quite apart from the traditional Zulu culture that was put forward as its notion of indigenous knowledge and the fieldworkers’ object of inquiry. Real social issues and their histories such as poverty and dispossession (in the “Zamazama Project”), identity and the making and remaking of Zulu (in “The Kraal”) and the history of regional and political conflicts (in “Umbumbulu Magistrate’s Court”) all surfaced, albeit obliquely, and were contained within an archive of indigenous knowledge.



### **What is excluded?**

An understanding of what is collected by the Ulwazi Programme raises questions about what is not collected and why. A consideration of other sites for the production of history in Umbumbulu, which I address later in the thesis, reveals the longer and more complex histories of the area, linked to ongoing succession debates, contemporary identity politics and the mobilisation of the past in order to gain access to resources in the present. An important aspect of Umbumbulu's contemporary history, which surfaced in preliminary interviews with fieldworkers and residents of Umbumbulu, and has left a tangible mark on social memory, is political conflict and violence. I make this assertion based on communication with the Umbumbulu Municipal Area Based Manager for Rural Development, Bheki Mchunu (interview, 2010 January 10), and discussions with fieldworkers from Umbumbulu (Bongiwe Ndlovu and Zanele Shange, interview, 2011 June 17), in which political instability and violence were continuously raised as central to the recent history of Umbumbulu.

The history of conflict in the Umbumbulu area stems from various instances of land shortages and succession disputes, including those that occurred in the 1920s between residents of the then Umlazi Reserve (now Umbumbulu) and white farmers. Official state intervention favoured the white farmers and a state-appointed chief was used to quell any dissidence within the reserve. This resulted in dissatisfaction with the state-appointed Mkhize chief and calls for re-installation of the hereditary chiefs, which subsequently reignited a long-standing succession dispute over the Mkhize chieftaincy between chiefs, Nkasa and Thimuni. As we will see in Chapter Four, Siyabonga Mkhize's book, *Uhlanga*

*Iwas'Embo: The History of the Embo People*, is an intervention into this long-standing, and as yet, unresolved, chiefly succession debate around which there is ongoing intra-Mkhize contestation. In the mid-1980s, clashes between the Mkhize and Makhanya areas of Umbumbulu, but with a complex array of allegiances, led to sustained fighting that subsequently mutated into broader political violence. The conflict between the two entailed two years of large scale battles, smaller incidents of violent conflict, a high death toll on both sides, criminal activity such as looting of shops and houses, and the death of three policemen (Mathis, 2008). Neither of these periods of conflict is recorded in any detail on the Ulwazi Wiki. Despite the fact that the intra-Mkhize succession disputes of the 1930s and the Embo-Makhanya conflict of the 1980s occurred in the areas in which the fieldworkers, Bongiwe Ndlovu and Zanele Shange, are from, none of their contributions directly engaged with this past political violence. Rather, their collected content had a much higher incidence of general, traditional Zulu practices and oral traditions, the type of content that the Ulwazi Programme mandate suggested was worthy of collecting.

Apart from the traditional and the customary aspects of Umbumbulu's past, one local historian, Desmond Makhanya, has devoted his energies to the preservation of what is commonly perceived as a *kholwa* heritage, a modernist identity that transcends clan politics. Desmond Makhanya has written the institutional history of the Adams College and its alumni, which has wider resonance in present-day KwaZulu-Natal and beyond, as part of the record of intellectual history in twentieth-century Natal, but more especially, for the Makhanya of Umbumbulu, and in particular, Desmond Makhanya's lineage, the

Makhubalos and Nernbulas. I discuss his work in detail in Chapter Five. At the time of writing in June 2013, the Ulwazi Wiki features no articles on the history of Adams College except in reference to renowned former alumni like John Dube and Anton Lembede. An article entitled “History of Adams”, which gave details of some of the history of the college, was deleted from the wiki in June 2010.

Significantly, neither Desmond Makhanya’s nor Siyabonga Mkhize’s work features directly on the Ulwazi Wiki, although there are three references to the latter’s book as a source.<sup>2</sup> The notion of indigenous knowledge that the Ulwazi Programme has adopted is defined and limited by the policy environment in which the programme operates. For the most part, this has resulted in proliferation of traditional Zulu content and an institutionalised version of the past that precludes some of the more complex and contested aspects of history in Umbumbulu. What surfaces is that the Ulwazi Programme provides an inhospitable online environment for the claims on the past made by local historians Siyabonga Mkhize and Desmond Makhanya. Nevertheless, Siyabonga Mkhize had an online presence in the form of a now obsolete Facebook group, as the Uhlanga Lwasembo Foundation, “a non governmental organisation which its main objective is to collect, promote and preserve the cultural heritage of *abaMbo* (Mkhize)” (Uhlanga Lwasembo Foundation, n.d.) and on the Archival Platform, a civil society archival initiative, where he has written an article on Mkhize family history that has stimulated significant response (Mkhize, 2010). Desmond Makhanya has virtually no online

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<sup>2</sup> The articles that reference *Uhlanga Lwas’Embo* deal with the history of the Mkhize people (in effect, a summary of the book), the history of the Mabhida surname and Mkhize *izibongo*.

presence, although in my discussions with him I made him aware of the Ulwazi Programme.

## **Conclusion**

There are various conclusions that can be drawn from this discussion. The first is that the Ulwazi Programme's claims as an inclusive and democratised initiative are worthy of critical investigation. The programme maintains an idealistic, institutionalised view of community heritage. It strives to be accessible to the communities in which it operates, for the Ulwazi Wiki to be used communally and for fieldworkers and the general public to generate content. Web statistics suggest increasing usage of the site within eThekweni Municipality. However, these statistics also reveal low, if any, contributions from registered users other than the core Ulwazi Programme team. The content that is submitted by fieldworkers is largely determined by the Ulwazi Programme mandate and has led to the preclusion of certain content, including the more complex and contested aspects of Umbumbulu's history. It has resulted in the collection of 'traditional Zulu material' that is predetermined, shaped and edited to fit with the protocols and priorities of municipal and national policies. In the example of Umbumbulu, this has resulted in an institutionalised version of the past that mutes an active understanding of the complexity of history in Umbumbulu and other areas for its production. However, this alone is too simplistic a conclusion. The Ulwazi Programme does not operate in a vacuum. Rather, as we have seen, it is deeply influenced by policies at national and municipal levels, following the municipal IDP and the national Indigenous Knowledge Systems mandate

for libraries. The programme can therefore be used as a specific example to examine a wider context.

Following the honeymoon period of the Mandela presidency in which South African memory work earned its exemplary status and received global positive critique, the Mbeki regime and 'African Renaissance' saw the rise of a more Africanist agenda, indigenous knowledge and a heritage project in which the recent past and its struggles were foregrounded while "the longer, more complex colonial history of the country, and the reasons why apartheid was successfully entrenched in the first instance, have been subsequently downplayed." (Meskell and Scheermeyer, 2008: 156) In its first incarnation, in the early post-apartheid era, heritage was seen as a therapeutic means to unite all South Africans in the 'New South Africa', irrespective of race or past. Where heritage is an *inclusive* category, indigenous knowledge as advanced by the South African government, is *exclusive*, inaccessible, as an official concept to so-called 'Whites', 'Indians' and 'Coloureds'.

Indigenous knowledge has been conceptualised in terms of a timeless African inheritance that, untouched by outside influence, remains intact and pertinent to the present. This is evidenced in the Indigenous Knowledge Systems Policy document in which the mandate for libraries calls for the provision of "opportunities for indigenous and local communities to actively record and share their contemporary history, culture and language." (Department of Science and Technology, 2005: 33) The policy has certain assumptions such as the existence of indigenous and local communities that have

contemporary history. The Ulwazi Programme, which aligns itself with municipal and national policy in order to secure funding, has absorbed these assumptions (at times, word-for-word) resulting in particular ideas around indigenous knowledge – contemporary expressions of Zulu cultural traditions – and the preclusion of other types of knowledge. The Ulwazi Programme has curated a particular version of the past, selecting certain materials for preservation, and imbuing them with new meaning through categorisation and ordering in the public presentation of a specific version of history.

Nevertheless, the Programme Leader is progressive in her thinking and the idea behind the Ulwazi Wiki is essentially democratic, particularly in comparison to the National Recordal System, which focuses solely on the socio-economic potential of indigenous knowledge. The way in which the Ulwazi Programme has interpreted and internalised the concept of indigenous knowledge is accommodating to, and provides a space for, the histories of all the inhabitants of the eThekweni Municipality. Rather, the bureaucratic environment in which the Ulwazi Programme functions is restrictive. Here, parallels can be drawn with Carolyn Hamilton's article on public deliberation in post-apartheid South Africa. Hamilton (2009: 370 – 371) writes that the ideal of a public sphere is central to the South African concept of democracy. The post-apartheid South African government has established an arena bristling with institutions designed to facilitate healthy public deliberation. Yet, as she argues, "certain apartheid legacies and contemporary political compromises have facilitated the reach of power into the convened public sphere", resulting in a situation where "the formal public sphere fostered by the state seeks consensus by corralling public deliberation within its ambit." Similarly, the post-

apartheid heritage sector is bristling with new, facilitative institutions and policies aimed at addressing the inequalities of the past and of providing a more inclusive, community-oriented and democratised heritage for all. However, these institutions and policies also call for consensus: consensus on the meaning of ‘indigenous knowledge’ and ‘community’; consensus on an ANC-specific vision of post-apartheid heritage. As such, the seemingly democratised and desirable environment in which the Ulwazi Programme operates, is in fact constraining, allowing only certain indigenous knowledge and histories to surface while other forms of knowledge and histories are precluded.

Nevertheless, while the Ulwazi Programme sets out to record what it understands to be indigenous knowledge – predominantly Zulu folktales, material culture and oral histories – the more contested and complex aspects of Umbumbulu’s history do emerge in some form on the Ulwazi Wiki. The archontic power and control that is exerted in the editing of fieldworkers’ submissions is discreet and infused with democratic idealism. The programme’s desire to collect knowledge is also not confined to the collection of sources for preservation, as is the norm of an archive or repository. In its collection policy and its broad conceptualisation of indigenous knowledge, the programme draws no concrete difference between *sources* and what the fieldworkers *produce* through a process of selection, using their own frames of reference.

While the mobilisation of a programme with a strong bureaucratic foundation seeks to preserve a particular form of indigenous knowledge, pressing social issues such as poverty, dispossession and identity, surface and are contained within the Ulwazi Wiki.

They percolate through the Ulwazi Wiki filters, through a loosely-defined notion of indigenous knowledge and are accepted 'indigenous knowledge'. We assume that a political power, in this case, the Ulwazi Programme, informed and constrained by the eThekweni Municipality and the ANC-dominated, post-apartheid heritage sector, will create or curate the archive that it wants. Yet, as with any archive, the process of archiving often results in the creation and preservation of records that capture and can reveal unintentional and incidental information about the past. Therefore, what is officially sought and included in the archive also reveals what is not anticipated and imagined.



*Chapter Three – “Some of these things aren’t written in books, we only have history...”*

Following the transition from minority to majority rule in South Africa, the ANC government implemented a set of economic and political reforms, characterised by a desire for the redistribution of wealth and political decentralization (Mathis, 2008: 1). Part of these reforms entailed the resizing and restructuring of municipalities for electoral purposes and development. The Demarcation Board that was set up under the Municipal Demarcation Act (No. 27 of 1998) reduced the number of municipalities from 843 to 284 and new municipal boundaries were set up for the second local government elections in 2000 (Goodenough, 2002: 30). As a result of this process, in Durban, 17 traditional authority areas and their leaders were incorporated into the city and the newly-extended eThekweni Municipality had to accommodate hereditary chiefs alongside democratically-elected ward councillors. In KwaZulu-Natal, where the institution of traditional leadership is deeply entrenched, this resulted in important political challenges and compromises. Tensions were exacerbated by differing political affiliations – Durban was historically an ANC stronghold and many of the *amakhosi* were Inkatha Freedom Party supporters – as well as the drawing of new municipal boundaries that cut across the Traditional Authority Areas that were under the *amakhosi*’s jurisdiction.

Situated within these broader political changes, Umbumbulu provides fertile ground for exploring some of the everyday ways in which municipal government and traditional leadership intersect, and how they mobilise the past in various forms and contexts in efforts to consolidate power and achieve political aims. Throughout the different periods

of state administration in what is today KwaZulu-Natal, chiefly authority has been determined with reference to the custodianship of loosely-defined bodies of tradition and custom, and functioned, to some extent, independently of governmental systems of record-keeping. However, with the *amakhosi*'s incorporation into the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) their power has been increasingly subjected to a system of documentary administration and notions of tradition and custom have been integrated into a broad legislative and policy environment. The realm of custom and tradition now intersects in more direct ways with the bureaucracy and records of the state than it did during the colonial and apartheid periods, exerting a much greater call on the *amakhosi* to participate in the world of documentary records.

In Durban, through initiatives like the Ulwazi Programme, the eThekweni Municipality is positioning itself as a custodian of 'heritage' and 'indigenous knowledge', which overlap considerably with the complex array of things rooted in understandings of the past and captured in ideas of tradition and custom. My focus on the *amakhosi* began to illuminate something of the ways in which tradition and custom are political resources and how exertion of custodianship over these bodies of knowledge is pertinent to the operations of power in KwaZulu-Natal, and a contested source of that power between *amakhosi* and government. In this chapter I investigate competing claims to custodianship over the resources of tradition and custom by the eThekweni Municipality and the *amakhosi*. As the *amakhosi* are progressively incorporated into official government, I look at mounting pressure on them, on the one hand, to defend and preserve that in which their authority is rooted (birthright, sanction of history, tradition and custom) and on the other, to bow to

an administrative regime in which accountability is based on the documentary record.

Victor Mkhize, the founder and manager of the Amakhosi Support Office of the eThekweni Municipality, a unit that mediates between the *amakhosi* and the municipality, occupies a pivotal position between the two. While he cannot speak for every traditional leader in the eThekweni Municipality, part of his mandate is to meet with traditional leaders, determine their needs and represent them as a consolidated collective. From this vantage point, he is privy to the wants and needs of the *amakhosi* and the ways in which their perspectives, practices and modes of governance intersect with the bureaucratic environment of the municipality, its aims, priorities and policies. Victor Mkhize also has a relationship with the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Zweli Mkhize, in his professional capacity and as part of the Mkhize family, as well as interactions with the Zulu king, Goodwill Zwelithini. He is therefore uniquely placed to comment on intra-Mkhize family relations, interactions with other clans, traditional affairs and how these relate to municipal and provincial government, and the Zulu royal family.

### **Amakhosi Support Office Manager**

In order to better understand the motivation behind the establishment of the Amakhosi Support Office and Victor Mkhize's perspectives on the *amakhosi*, their roles and interactions with local government, it is necessary to first understand his background and how he came to be interested in, and involved with, the *amakhosi* of eThekweni Municipality. It is important to foreground that there are limitations to my understanding of Victor Mkhize's background and perspectives. Firstly, our meetings took place in a

mutually-constituted space with me as a researcher and Victor Mkhize as an interviewee. Before the discussions I made him aware of my intentions, the aims of my project and the different aspects it entailed. As a result, his responses to my questions were influenced by my role as a researcher, his knowledge of it and of the broader aims of my research. Secondly, Victor Mkhize's position is inherently political. The office he manages mediates between the *amakhosi* and the municipality. The type and level of detail of information he offered to me was defined and limited by his role as a government spokesperson and as a representative of the *amakhosi*. That is not to say that Victor Mkhize was reluctant to share his opinions with me. He is passionate about his work, has strong views and at times became quite animated when discussing what he saw as the roles and significance of traditional leaders in local government and the place of 'traditional culture' in post-apartheid South Africa. In the following section, I recount my various interactions with him through a self-reflexive ethnography. I offer a close account of my exchanges with Victor Mkhize at a particular time and place in order to give the reader a better sense of what occurred during my fieldwork and how my analysis of these interactions informed the conclusions I draw at the end of the chapter.

My first attempt at meeting Victor Mkhize proved unsuccessful. When I arrived at the Amakhosi Support Office in the suburb of Pinetown, to the west of Durban, I was told that he was at another meeting. The secretary made a few phone calls, revealed that he was unable to see me and asked if I could make another appointment. My second attempt was more fruitful. I arrived punctually and sat on the sofa in the waiting room, flicking through a selection of the eThekweni Municipality's Integrated Development Plans and

scanning the “Traditional Leaders of KwaZulu-Natal” posters on the wall. There are far more traditional leaders, predominantly men, but also women, in the various districts of the province than I had ever imagined and I realised that the institution of traditional leadership in KwaZulu-Natal, something that I had not encountered or thought about much before the start of my research, is firmly established and far-reaching. The secretary in the waiting room was listening to the Zulu radio station, Ukhosi FM, and I listened intently to fine tune my ear in anticipation of a Zulu-intensive interview with Victor Mkhize. This turned out to be unnecessary. After about fifteen minutes of waiting Victor Mkhize appeared, greeted me in English and led me into a large, adjoining boardroom. He was friendly, but professional, and my initial nerves dissipated as we settled into the discussion. Subsequent conversations were conducted at the same venue in a similar manner and I draw on and reference these throughout the paper.

I began by asking Victor Mkhize about his background, where he was born and grew up. I was pleased to hear that he was from Umbumbulu, the focus area of my research. He attended Banyena Primary School, which is based in the Embo-Thimuni traditional authority area and began his secondary education in the Makhanya area of Umbumbulu. From 1985 to 1999, he worked in the private sector for a construction company. In 1998, with others from Umbumbulu, he established the Embo Masakhane Community Development Organisation, a community-based initiative with links to the Durban Institute of Technology. In 1999, he explained that he began working with the Community and Development Department at the then University of Natal. In 2002, while still at the University of Natal, Victor Mkhize began working for CHESP (Community

Higher Education Service Partnerships) and with the Valley Trust, a local, politically non-aligned, non-governmental organisation that has been in operation in the traditional authority areas to the west of Durban for many decades (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2010 August 06). Following a combined project between the Valley Trust and CHESP, Victor Mkhize realised the *amakhosi*'s need for administrative support. Many of the *amakhosi* he had engaged with also expressed a desire to act as a collective and to work more closely with local government. He offered the following details:

After a joint project with Valley Trust was focussing on outcomes based development for the *amakhosi*, we started looking at leadership styles to facilitate the process of *amakhosi* working as a collective. The programme was threefold:

- 1) Personal leadership
- 2) Working as group
- 3) Organisational leadership (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2010 November 16)

Victor Mkhize explained how conversations with various *amakhosi* revealed their desire for an institutional relationship with the local municipality. He spoke with the then Director of the Valley Trust, Dr. Keith Wimble, who suggested he write a proposal on what he envisaged as a solution. With Victor Mkhize's written proposal documents, Dr. Wimble approached the Durban City Manager at the time, Dr. Mike Sutcliffe. Sutcliffe, in turn, recommended the idea of an *amakhosi* support office to the Executive Committee of the municipality, following which it was established in 2000 (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2010 November 16). This move was no doubt influenced by the ANC's newly acquired control of the KwaZulu-Natal provincial government, following the 2000 elections. Jo Beall and Mduduzi Ngonyama (2009) argue that before 2000, the *amakhosi* had a direct route to the Inkatha Freedom Party or IFP-dominated provincial government, through which they could by-pass the municipal government. After 2000, they were

almost entirely dependent on the municipality “apart from social development spending, which came under an IFP member of the Executive Committee of the provincial government.” (19) A changing political landscape therefore stimulated action from the *amakhosi* and increased efforts to engage with an ANC-run local government.

### **The Amakhosi Support Office**

The Amakhosi Support Office was Victor Mkhize’s brainchild, as he made clear in our discussions:

Yes, I wrote the proposal. It was a simple principle of partnership. There is a section, 81, in the Municipal Structures Act, which says that if the municipality is delivering services or doing projects, they must get the ‘expression’ of traditional leaders.<sup>1</sup> So that is where I was sourcing that idea of saying, in the absence of legislation governing traditional leaders, let me put this in place so we promote the idea of cooperative governance (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2010 November 16).

However, he also credited two *amakhosi*, namely Inkosi Bhekisisa Bhengu, who is now the Chairperson of Provincial House of Traditional Leaders in KwaZulu-Natal and Inkosi Zibuse Mlaba, brother of the former Mayor of Durban, Obed Mlaba. Inkosi Mlaba is an ardent ANC supporter and traditionalist who:

had successfully used development activities as a vehicle for negotiating a dialogue between the youth and the elders, a process which also helped bring peace to the area [over which he presides, KwaXimba]. This in turn honed his conflict-resolution skills and prepared him well for a broader role as peacemaker and broker between *amakhosi* and eThekweni Metro during the post-apartheid era (Beall and Ngonyama, 2009: 18).<sup>2</sup>

He ensured that within his chieftaincy, his headmen worked with elected councillors and engaged cooperatively with business and civil society organisations. In my discussions

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<sup>1</sup> The Municipal Structures Act, No. 117 of 1998, 1998:Section 81 (3) states “Before a municipal council takes a decision on any matter directly affecting the area of a traditional authority, the council must give the leader of that authority the opportunity to express a view on that matter.”

<sup>2</sup> For more on Inkosi Zibuse Mlaba and his efforts to bridge the divide between traditional leaders and local government, see Ntshangase (2003).

with him, Victor Mkhize recounted the input of these two *amakhosi*:

They assisted a lot in terms of mobilising other *amakhosi* to work as a collective. My approach is that...I am not an *inkosi*. The person who can rightly do that is a traditional leader, Inkosi Bhengu. I put together the framework of partnership principles, the need to work with the municipality, the concept of sustainable partnerships and then he used to do presentations [to other *amakhosi*] (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2010 November 16).

He also made sure to point out that the Amakhosi Support Office was started with non-governmental funds: "Sponsorship from the Kellogg Foundation through their African Leadership in Action and the National Development Agency through their Capacity Building Fund." (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2010 November 16) The Amakhosi Support Office is now an integrated part of the municipality. In ongoing support of cooperation between the *amakhosi* and municipal councillors, Victor Mkhize organises development and advocacy workshops, run in conjunction with the Valley Trust, which have "in turn fed into the municipality's consultation process in relation to the IDPs [Integrated Development Plans], which feed into and inform metropolitan planning." (Beall and Ngonyama, 2009: 21)

In an interview in November 2010, when I asked Victor Mkhize about the functions of the Amakhosi Support Office, he outlined the following roles:

- **Advisory Role:** Either to government departments who are interested in working with traditional communities or when the traditional leaders express an interest in working with local government structures like the municipality and other departments.
- **Facilitation:** He explained that the Amakhosi Support Office convenes sessions to establish the *amakhosi*'s common concerns, problems and interests, in order to clarify and define their roles, so that they can contribute positively to government



policy and programmes. He gave the example of the *amakhosi* being asked to provide input at events like the Land Reform Summit and the Traditional Leader Summit and added:

We all know that some of these things aren't written in books, we only have history... But how do you turn that into a demonstrable act? By doing facilitator work! Trying to make a traditional leader realise what his role is, why is he existing within this traditional leader institution.

- Monitoring and evaluating the work of *amakhosi*: The office monitors and evaluates the work of traditional leaders in line with the service delivery agenda of the municipal council.
- Administrative support: The office provides administrative support to the *amakhosi* so that they are able to produce monthly reports on whom they have engaged with, workshops they have attended and issues they have addressed, following which the Amakhosi Support Office compiles a consolidated report with recommendations. As Victor Mkhize declared:

There are 320 *amakhosi* in KZN. How many traditional leaders have got diaries and know how to open a Groupwise [email software] or whatever? There are very few. But, administratively we have supported them [eThekweni *amakhosi*] and gradually, I can now proudly say, eThekweni *amakhosi* can now write reports, chair a meeting, come to a decision, know how to resolve conflict in their areas as opposed to just trying cases, which was becoming kangaroo courts (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2010 November 16).

Victor Mkhize painted a picture of the Amakhosi Support Office helping traditional leaders to redefine their roles in a changed political environment and to facilitate working relationships between them and the local municipality. Importantly, the office enables the *amakhosi* to function within government frameworks of bureaucracy and to deal with, and participate in, encroaching bureaucratic demands for record-making across a broad range of digital and non-digital media. Whereas in the past, they would have been largely free of an administration based on the record, they are now expected to have diaries, write monthly reports, check their Groupwise email accounts and are monitored and

evaluated based on the records they produce. When I asked Inkosi Khetha Makhanya of the Makhanya area in Umbumbulu about the records he was required to produce, he explained that part of his duties was to write birth and death certificates, and to send them to Home Affairs. His office, complete with record-making technologies like fax machines, photocopiers, and computers, was also required to keep records of births, deaths and cases tried at the adjoining traditional authority court (Inkosi Khetha Makhanya, interview, 2011 April 01).

The 'Isuccession' Programme is also indicative of the ways in which a system of record-keeping has influenced chiefly practices. The programme is a new mechanism introduced by the Amakhosi Support Office whereby: "The *amakhosi* need to list their sons and say, the eldest son is so and so, followed by so and so. Let them be written down." (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 June 15) They are required to record in print their direct lineage in order to avoid future conflicts over succession. The above suggests a new form of interlocution. Whereas, during the previous colonial and apartheid periods, matters relating to the *amakhosi* and those over whom they ruled, generally only entered the record when they were communicated to government officials or other literate interlocutors, the domains of tradition and custom and the written record now intersect in more direct ways. Victor Mkhize now plays an important role as an interlocutor. He keenly assists the *amakhosi* to lay down records as this is an increasingly important basis on which they are evaluated.

During our discussions, Victor Mkhize gave details of the relationship between the

*amakhosi* and municipality, highlighting the support the *amakhosi* give to the councils and the municipality in terms of the municipal Integrated Development Plan, as well as their role as administrators of land in traditional communities. But he also expressed concerns about the difficulties involved in the relationship. He explained that although the interaction between the two was outlined and agreed upon in terms of Section 81 of the Municipal Structures Act, he failed to understand: “Why institutions of government don’t use this section. It lays out how municipalities should interact with traditional leaders. I don’t know why it is taking so long because the act was passed in 1998.” (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2010 November 16) The above quote suggests that the incorporation of traditional institutions into democratic structures of government has proved difficult and there remain ongoing negotiations and power struggles between the *amakhosi* and the municipality in terms of defining their roles and the part they play in cooperative governance. Indeed, Beall (2006: 458) writes that South Africa has a difficult **history** of traditional leaders who have long been involved in different systems of government, tainted by the country’s colonial and apartheid pasts. The resurgence of traditional power across the African continent also coincided with, and further complicated, South Africa’s political transition. In addition, as elsewhere, traditional leaders have been inventive and adaptable to changing political conditions in order to maintain power.

### **Interactions between the *amakhosi* and formal government**

In order better to comprehend what control over the resources of tradition and custom means for the current *amakhosi* in the eThekweni Municipality, including those in

Umbumbulu, and their interactions over this with the municipality, it is necessary to trace their past relationships with different forms of colonial and apartheid government, and their ability to adapt and maintain relevance in changing political conditions and different bureaucratic systems of government.

*The amakhosi's interaction with colonial government*

A relationship between the *amakhosi* and formal structures of government is not a new phenomenon. During the colonial period in South Africa, the British government utilised two contrasting modes of governing the local population. The first was to infiltrate already established structures of chiefly power and to erode and replace them with colonial records and systems of bureaucracy. This more direct approach was attempted in what is now the Eastern Cape, the effects of which have resulted in a different set of negotiations between contemporary traditional leaders, local government and the inhabitants of their areas. Mazibuko Jara's study of five rural villages in the Eastern Cape, for example, shows that local contestations about governance and who has power over land are not only between traditional leaders and local government. In the face of what he calls a double crisis of legitimacy – dissatisfaction with the efforts of traditional leaders and local government – the five villages have resorted to autonomous institutions and mechanisms to leverage resources (Jara, 2011).

The second approach was that of 'indirect rule', employed by, amongst others, colonial governments in Nigeria and British East Africa, and in Natal, notably by Theophilus Shepstone, who held various positions in the colonial government, the last of which was

the Secretary for Native Affairs from 1856 until 1877 (Beall, Mkhize and Vawda, 2004: 6). Known as the 'Shepstone System', this form of indirect rule relied on administrators like Shepstone having a good working knowledge of local political systems, traditional authority and governance, and how they could be used to control local populations indirectly (Etherington, 1989; Hamilton, 1998). John Lambert (1995: 271) writes that this entailed leaving social structures intact and allowing chiefs to retain many of the powers they traditionally exercised. For indirect rule to succeed, chiefs required the support of their people in order to continue drawing the levies, tribute from them and the labour services required by the colonial state. In return for cooperating with the new authorities, many chiefs were able to consolidate their positions, broaden their power bases and secure land and livestock.

Although Shepstone initially acknowledged the *amakhosi*'s authority in terms of land allocation (of land that was held in communal tenure by their followers) and in trying cases, colonial magistrates later gained increasing power over them. From 1850, magistrates were appointed to administer Native Law and to try criminal cases while *amakhosi* were only involved in minor criminal cases and dispute resolution (Beall, Mkhize and Vawda, 2004: 6). Despite the increasing restrictions placed on their authority, marked by their waning judicial power and capacity to distribute land, the *amakhosi* formed an important part of the colonial administration's system of indirect rule. In contextualising her study of traditional leaders in post-apartheid Durban, Ingrid Palmay writes about how, during the colonial era, chiefs in Natal became a part of the colonial administration, were accountable to colonial administrators and had "effectively

become government employees through the introduction of salaries and the definition and curtailing of their roles and responsibilities.” (Palmary, 2004: Traditional leadership under apartheid)

While the above might imply a comprehensive incorporation of chiefly power into the colonial administration, it is important to consider that, to some degree, the *amakhosi* functioned independently of colonial systems of bureaucracy, based on written records. The available secondary literature on the system of indirect rule allows one insight into the documentary regime that underpinned it. Colonial officials were, overwhelmingly, the producers of the documentary record, typically of court cases, and other matters in which they were involved, or where they interacted with the *amakhosi* or their envoys and spokespeople. However, matters amongst the *amakhosi*, between them and those over whom they governed, almost without exception, only entered the record at the point at which these matters were relayed to government officials or to other literate interlocutors such as local missionaries.

Mamdani (1996: 63) describes the ‘Shepstone System’ as a “regime of total control”. This is probably an exaggeration, as the colonial government did not have sufficient human and financial resources to achieve this (Beall, 2006: 6 – 7). Indeed, Breckenridge (2008: 14 – 15) offers details of the Shepstone System’s “extreme administrative parsimony”, arguing convincingly that it operated with little reference to any kind of registry or archive and very few administrators. He shows the lack of provision for administering laws that were implemented and the “startling absence of documentary

bureaucracy” that characterised its fundraising efforts in relation to the local population. It is likely that chiefly authority functioned at a local level with limited or at times, no documentary record. In his assessment of what he calls the chiefs’ “partial incorporation” into the colonial administrative structure, Delius (2008: 224) writes:

It might be imagined that such a thoroughgoing and top down transformation of chieftainship would have effectively severed the roots of chiefly support and popular accountability. But the image of systematic control conveyed by legislation and regulation belied the more complex realities on the ground.

He argues that rural people saw chiefly authority as vital to preserving a measure of economic, political and cultural freedom from white rule and points to a degree of autonomy enjoyed by chiefs outside of bureaucratic structures, including those who were “officially recognized” by the colonial government. In addition, in the then Colony of Natal, state intervention in the allotment of land was less marked than in the Transkei and the Cape (224 – 226). Chiefs in Natal realised how much their authority depended on their retention of judicial powers and as Charles Dlamini (1988: 134) argues, they often exceeded their jurisdiction by trying criminal cases. Within the structures of indirect rule, chiefs continued to rely on tribute paid by their supporters and received fines and fees paid by those who brought disputes to their courts. Colonial magistrates replied by accusing chiefs of bribery, nepotism and of administering arbitrary justice. For their followers, the chiefs provided an important continuity with the past and remained custodians of customary knowledge and practices, which only certain administrators, like Shepstone and later, James Stuart, immersed themselves in. As such, in a number of ways, at a local level chiefs during the colonial era functioned beyond the realm of the documentary record.

That is not to say that there was a lack of awareness about record-making amongst the inhabitants of Natal. In the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Natal Africans became increasingly aware of the significance of the documentary record and attempted to make use of it in a variety of ways. There are signs that many of James Stuart's interviewees were keenly interested in having their views recorded in print by him (Hamilton, 2011: 331). Magema Fuze, a print technician at Bishop John Colenso's Ekukhanyeni Mission Station published regularly in the Zulu-English newspaper, *Ilanga laseNatal*, and wrote a book on the history of the clans that settled in the colony of Natal entitled *Abantu Abamnyama Lapa Bavela Ngakona* (1922), later published in English as *The Black People and Whence They Came* (1978).

#### *Amakhosi during the twentieth century*

With the Union of South Africa in 1910, indirect rule was effectively expanded and entrenched across the country and *amakhosi* became progressively more dependent on the government for resources and power. Although the Native Administration Act (No. 38 of 1927) stripped chiefs of much of their independence and the Governor General of South Africa came to prescribe their duties, powers and conditions of service, the National Party began to take a more conciliatory approach to *amakhosi* when it realised they fitted in with its segregationist policies (Beall and Ngonyama, 2009: 19). In 1948, the Nationalist government came into power and when it began to develop and enforce laws based on its vision of 'separate development', a significant number of *amakhosi*, enticed by the prospect of wealth and political power, played a central role in the implementation of these laws. Palmary (2004: Traditional leadership under apartheid)



maintains that during apartheid the *amakhosi*'s position as administrators of the state was cemented and their key role became to maintain law and order, in particular to uphold apartheid laws, report unrest to the Bantu Commissioner and disperse unlawful assemblies. Legislation also contributed to *amakhosi* working as administrative agents of the apartheid state. The introduction of the Bantu Authorities Act in 1951 created the legal basis for the deportation of black Africans into designated "homeland reserve areas" or bantustans, which, Sarah Mathis (2009: 58) argues was a move towards population categorisation based on ethnicity rather than race. The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act (1959) allowed for the transformation of the reserves into fully-fledged independent bantustans, divided along ethnic lines. Black South Africans were denied South African citizenship rights and lived within a "territorial authority where an ethnically defined administrative system was based on tribal authority." (Beall and Ngonyama, 2009: 19) This offered an ideal environment for the proliferation of ethnically defined organisations like Inkatha.

From the 1950s onwards, the former colonial reserves south of the Thukela River (including Umbumbulu) were divided into Tribal and Regional Authorities. In 1970, a single Zulu Territorial Authority was established, which subsequently became the semi-autonomous bantustan of KwaZulu, under the administration of Inkatha and Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi (Harries, 1993: 110 – 113). Within KwaZulu, Buthelezi was able to shape and utilise broad, ethnically-defined ideas about Zulu tradition and identity that lent significant power to the *amakhosi*, as well as governance based on tradition and

custom.<sup>3</sup> He was able to this “because of his support base among KZN’s *amakhosi* and their *izinduna*, or headmen, who both bought into and gave credence to his use of Zulu ethnic identity for political purposes.” (Beall, Mkhize and Vawda, 2004: 7)

Although subject to the bureaucracy of apartheid and later the KwaZulu government, there is evidence to suggest that, to a considerable extent, the *amakhosi* continued to function independently of the documentary record. Again, in making these historical points I am forced to rely on glimpses of record-keeping processes that appear in the secondary literature. The “Zulu Chiefs and Headmens Act of 1974”, which dealt with the functions of chiefs, followed the central state’s allocation of roles and duties with control of people as its predominant theme. The Act details how chiefs were required to report to the KwaZulu government important matters such as civil unrest but there is no mention of their administrative or record-making requirements (Maré and Hamilton, 1987: 230 – 232). Indeed, Maré and Hamilton’s (88 – 92) account of the chiefs in KwaZulu suggests a disjuncture between them and the bantustan bureaucracy. They highlight reports of the chiefs’ dissatisfaction with the KwaZulu administration, arguing that especially “at the local level KwaZulu authorities are not accepted as wholeheartedly as they like to make out.” (90)

Delius (2008: 230) explains that given their role in the system of influx control, chiefs were afforded new powers and backing from an increasingly coercive state. This allowed them to make greater demands on their subjects’ time and money, including levies for

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion on the formation of the Inkatha and its manipulation and command of tradition and power, see Maré and Hamilton (1987) and Maré (1992).

cars, houses, schools, clinics and tribal offices, as well as gifts and bribes for the provision of services. In many cases these funds were misappropriated. As he notes, “provision was made under the Bantu authorities system for proper tribal accounts to be kept, but in most cases tribal financial records were in a shambles or non-existent.” In order to maintain chiefly support, the apartheid state tolerated this maladministration and corruption but it did not go unnoticed within the KwaZulu bantustan. In 1978, Buthelezi “attacked chiefs for ‘fleecing’ the people in that they were charging for sites, arable land and service such as pensions” (Maré and Hamilton, 1987: 90). Lungisile Ntsebeza (2008: 250 – 251) gives details of the land allocation process under tribal authorities during apartheid, which entailed calling a general ward assembly, issuing “a receipt issued by the magistrate as proof” and in some cases, registering as a taxpayer at the Magistrate’s Office. In practice, the process was far more complex. *Amakhosi* were upwardly accountable to government rather than to their followers, which allowed them to exploit “the lack of checks and balances” by allocating land without following the administrative procedure and illegally taxing the communities under their jurisdiction. These examples give some indication of the extent to which, during apartheid, *amakhosi* were able to function largely free of a system of administrative records. In a similar way to during the colonial era, the affairs of the *amakhosi* and those over whom they presided, almost without fail, only entered the record at the point at which they were conveyed to government officials.

#### *Amakhosi and democratic governance*

There has been significant debate about the place of traditional leadership in post-

apartheid South Africa. Claims that “an institution based on hereditary and patriarchal principles was antithetical to democratic ideals” resonated with arguments that traditional leadership was manipulated under colonial rule and functioned to legitimise and facilitate separate development under apartheid (Beall and Ngonyama, 2009: 4). Amidst early talk of the abolishment of the institution of traditional leadership, traditional leaders were ultimately seen as a way for the ANC to reach out to rural populations from its primarily urban bases (4). Traditional leaders are recognised under the Constitution of 1996 and are represented at all levels of government with national, provincial and district Houses of Traditional Leaders, as well as more local traditional councils that operate alongside municipal government structures.<sup>4</sup> While the Constitution formally acknowledged chieftaincy, the reach of traditional leaders was largely confined to the realm of the customary. With this limitation, their key resource was, and in many ways, continues to be, knowledge of tradition and custom. Section 211(1) of the Constitution of South Africa (1996) recognises the “status and role of traditional leadership, according to customary law, subject to the Constitution”, while Section 211(2) ties it to “matters relating to traditional leadership, the role of traditional leadership, the role of traditional leaders, customary law and the customs of communities observing a system of customary law”.

Subsequent pieces of legislation have been passed that have recognised the chiefs’ roles in local government. In 1998, the White Paper on Local Government accorded traditional

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<sup>4</sup> Provincial houses of traditional leaders were established in all six provinces that have traditional leaders, namely the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, the Free State, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and North West. According to law, 40% of the members of traditional councils must be elected and one third must be women.

leaders a cooperative role in local government, to quell local disputes, promote and preserve the culture and tradition of communities, and to facilitate on matters of development. These were largely consultative roles and the municipalities still held final jurisdiction as the traditional leaders had no direct role in the decision-making processes. Both the White Paper and the Municipal Structures Act (also 1998) continued to deny the chiefs any privileged role in decision-making (Beall, Mkhize and Vawda, 2004: 8). The Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act of 2003 aimed to reinforce the role of the traditional leaders in local governance and endorsed the operation of traditional councils<sup>5</sup> alongside other local government structures. Aninka Claassens (2008) maintains that this effectively converted tribal authorities (which, under apartheid, served to divide people into ethnic groupings) into traditional councils, thereby re-imposing tribal identities and authority structures. Beall and Ngonyama (2009: 9) argue that the Act significantly entrenched the authority of traditional leaders, particularly in conjunction with the Communal Land Rights Act (CLRA) of 2004. The CLRA dealt with the transfer of ownership of communal land in the former homelands from the state to communities and gave a central role to traditional councils in the allocation and administration of this land.<sup>6</sup>

More recent legislation, the National House of Traditional Leaders Act (Act No. 22 of 2009), further consolidated the position of traditional leaders in relation to government. Whereas the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act of 2003 allowed for

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<sup>5</sup> A traditional council, composed of mostly unelected members who include traditional leaders and their appointees, is established in an area, which has been recognised by the premier as a "traditional community" (Department of Provincial and Local Government, 2003: Section 3, 1).

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed discussion on the politics and debates surrounding the CLRA, see Claassens and Cousins (2008).

the creation of a local House of Traditional Leaders, the new Act paved the way for the establishment of the National House of Traditional Leaders. It also outlined the powers and duties of the house and its role in “nation-building, stable communities, the preservation of culture and traditions” and highlighted that “cooperative relations and partnerships with national government are to be established in the interests of development and service delivery.” (South African Government Information, 2013)

Further legislation, the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Amendment Act (Act No. 23 of 2009) amended the 2003 Act and served to regulate, among other things, the election of members of local houses of traditional leaders and the roles that traditional leaders play. The extent to which the current ANC government is accommodating of the institution of traditional leadership is evident in the current parliamentary debate over the proposed Traditional Courts Bill. Despite stiff opposition from civic structures like the Alliance for Rural Democracy, a cross-section of civil society organisations, and the Rural People’s Movement, members of the public and academic institutions alike, the government is willing to negotiate the Bill, which seeks to regulate the traditional courts to bring them in line with the Constitution. Critics claim that the Bill, amongst other things, undermines the rights of women and bolsters the powers of the traditional leaders and their ability to create and enforce customary law within the areas under their jurisdiction (Claassens, 2008; Claassens, 2012).

Lungisile Ntsebeza (2005) levels broader criticisms against traditional leaders, arguing compellingly that they are unwilling to relinquish the powers and privileges granted to them by the apartheid state, and the salaries and benefits they now receive as part of

formal government. He maintains that by allowing non-democratically elected traditional leaders to control land administration, as part of efforts to decentralise government, the state has significantly consolidated their powers, which has important consequences for governance in rural areas. Given that a number of chiefs were implicated in colonial, segregationist and apartheid rule, it is important to note the conciliatory stance that the post-apartheid ANC government has taken in dealing with them. It continues to appease traditional leaders, giving them more clearly defined and greater roles in local, and more recently, national government, including the creation of the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, which operates at local and provincial levels of government. As the South African Government Presidency website (2009) illustrates:

Government remains committed to strengthening the institution of traditional leadership and appreciates the role it plays in society. The reconfiguration of the Department of Provincial and Local Government into the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs signifies the importance that is placed on the role and place of traditional leaders in the lives of people, especially in rural areas. Our administration regards traditional leaders as partners in the implementation of the programmes of government. A number of departments have put in place legislation that clearly defines the role of traditional leaders in the areas of justice, in the establishment of traditional courts and the administration of tribal land. This is a demonstration of government's willingness to effect the power and recognition of traditional authorities and leadership (The Presidency, 2012).

In post-apartheid South Africa, the ANC government has increasingly acknowledged the power of traditional leaders, in terms of land administration, local governance, development initiatives, in cultural affairs, and, as is currently being debated, their judicial powers over those within traditional authority areas. Yet, through their incorporation into an official government department, and the numerous pieces of legislation that have been drawn up to facilitate this process, traditional leaders are increasingly subject to bureaucratic procedures, administration and accountability

through a system of records.

#### *Amakhosi in post-apartheid eThekweni*

While the above might suggest a progressively more settled relationship between traditional leaders and the South African state, it is important to note that the accommodation of traditional leaders into local government was not a comfortable transition. Tensions remain between traditional leaders and local government, their modes of governance and sources of power, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal where the institution of traditional leadership is deeply rooted. Beall (2006: 459) highlights the fact that many of the *amakhosi* and their *izinduna* (headmen) were involved in the political violence between supporters of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the ANC in Durban from the late 1980s onwards, complicating their incorporation into urban politics. She also notes that Durban has always been an ANC stronghold in a province that was formerly in the hands of the IFP, largely as a result of support from *amakhosi*. An example of the difficulties involved in establishing cooperative governance is the Municipal Demarcation Act of 1998, which precipitated a scathing backlash from *amakhosi* and volatile interactions in KwaZulu-Natal between them and the Demarcation Board. In Durban in January 2000, a protest by *amakhosi* against the new municipal boundaries subsequently led to a protracted negotiation regarding the redrawn municipal borders, the subdivision of the *amakhosi*'s land and their representation on elected local government councils. An agreement was only achieved with the intervention of then President Thabo Mbeki who worked in conjunction with, amongst others, Sidney Mufamadi, the then Minister of Provincial and Local Government and the Zulu king



(Beall, Mkhize and Vawda, 2004: 11 – 12). Even after this agreement, relations between local ward councillors and the *amakhosi* remained strained due to a lack of clarity on their respective roles and authority, compounded by legislation such as the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (2003), which suggested that traditional leaders primarily played a supportive role to the municipalities and ward councillors.

Due to the re-organisation of local government, and the further subdivision of local and metropolitan municipalities into electoral wards, elected ward councillors and traditional leaders now perform similar roles in rural and peri-urban areas. In early interactions between the two, this led to objections from the *amakhosi* who were concerned about the balance of power between them and ward councillors, and wanted clarification on their roles, remuneration and representation within municipal structures (Goodenough, 2002: 47). Cooperative governance has proven particularly difficult where the boundaries of wards and chiefdoms do not coincide, and consultation between councillors and *amakhosi* has to take place across a range of different chiefdoms and wards.

A lack of clarity on their roles was no doubt exacerbated by the similarity in the tasks performed by the municipality and the *amakhosi*. Chiefly authority is based on, among other things, birthright, the sanction of history, as well as knowledge of tradition and custom. In the past, *amakhosi* maintained control of their communities through customary law, promoted social cohesion through traditional practices and ceremonies, and allocated land as a symbolic resource that constituted membership to the communities over which they presided. Palmay writes that as local administrators,

*amakhosi* play a central role in social control of communities, which historically “included reducing community uprisings, hearing cases in court and promoting positive interactions between community members through the promotion of traditional ceremonies and other community wide activities.” They have also played a key role in economic development, which typically involved securing land for people and now also “includes a range of economic improvement projects such as small business support or farming projects.” (Palmary, 2004: Rural urban linkages and the promotion of safety) Similarly, the chief would have been looked to as “the guarantor of tribal harmony (by playing a key role in conflict resolution); of economic viability of homesteads (by playing a key role in managing the allocation of land rights and land-use rights to households); and social and cultural coherence and continuity (by playing a key role in social and ritual aspects of tribal life).” (quoted in Beall, Mkhize and Vawda, 2004: 6) Therefore, the functions of the *amakhosi* – conflict resolution, coordinating socio-economic development and aiding in the delivery of services – are also some of the key functions of local municipality, the difference being that the *amakhosi* perform these roles with reference to custodianship of tradition and custom.

### **Claims to Custodianship**

From the beginning of the colonial era, throughout the Shepstone system of native administration and the apartheid structure of bantustans, access to resources for African inhabitants of the present-day KwaZulu-Natal region has been determined through reference to loosely defined bodies of tradition and custom, the custodians of which have been *amakhosi*, recognised by the colonial and later apartheid governments. In the

present, claims to custodianship of these bodies of knowledge are a contested resource between *amakhosi* and local government. With the transition to democracy and the ascendancy of the ANC government, notions of tradition and custom have been reconfigured within a broader legislative and policy environment as opposed to functioning predominantly within the realm of the bantustan, in this case, KwaZulu.

There exists a tension between different modes of governance. On the one hand, the new modern democracy, which is based on records and emphasises citizens with individual rights and responsibilities, and on the other, chiefly governance based on the traditional and customary, maintained through memory and orality, and which conceives of people as chiefly subjects. What was previously held separately as the domain of the 'tribal subject' (custom and tradition) now intersects with the domain of the democratic citizen (legislation, government records and archives), which has resulted in current official systems of record-keeping investing in the notion of indigenous knowledge, a classification that overlaps substantially with tradition and custom. This investment is evident in the work of Ulwazi Programme where a focus on the collection of indigenous knowledge has resulted in the proliferation of traditional and customary materials. The programme's model draws heavily on the National Policy for Indigenous Knowledge Systems where the overarching classification of indigenous knowledge incorporates, among other aspects, customary practices and traditional medicines. Indigenous knowledge "holders" are found in communities that are described as "local", "indigenous" and "traditional" (Department of Science and Technology, 2005: 13, 19, 23).

Whereas during the apartheid era, Inkatha maintained power in the KwaZulu bantustan (including Umbumbulu) through an emphasis on chiefly governance, and the manipulation, control and custodianship of tradition and custom, in the post-apartheid era, by creating a participatory programme like the Ulwazi Programme, which values individual contributions, promotes digital skills enhancement and access to information, the ANC-run eThekweni Municipality encourages the ideal of tech-savvy, informed citizens with all of the rights associated with a modern democracy, including the right to choose which political party runs municipal government. This move also suggests that tradition and custom are resources available to the public at large. From the above, we can surmise that while the Ulwazi Programme is concerned with the collection and dissemination of local knowledge, the project serves well the ANC's agenda in KwaZulu-Natal, offering a way of engaging in the arena of tradition and custom, long dominated by Inkatha and Inkatha-supporting *amakhosi*. In the following section I focus on competing claims to custodianship by the municipality and *amakhosi*. While recognising that the past, tradition and custom play a role in conflict resolution, land allocation and social and cultural cohesion, I am interested in the ways in which claims to the custodianship of the past in different forms – tradition, custom, indigenous knowledge and heritage – are mobilised in the present by the *amakhosi* and the municipality (through the Ulwazi Programme) as a means to secure and maintain power, strengthen authority and exert influence. The Ulwazi Programme is not politically ambitious but rather furthers the municipality's agenda by responding to its aims and policies.

### *The Ulwazi Programme as custodian*

Interviews with the Programme Leader and the Deputy Head of the eThekweni Libraries and Heritage Department (ELHD), Guy Redman, show that they considered the Ulwazi Programme to be a custodian of local knowledge, history and culture (subsumed under the titles “heritage” and “indigenous knowledge”). Excerpts from an interview with the Deputy Head of the ELHD reveal that the national government’s focus on the power of recuperative, participatory heritage has also been taken to heart. According to him:

We find that people don’t own their heritage and that is a big challenge if you [Ulwazi Programme/ELHD] are a custodian of heritage. One way to get them to own it is to get them to contribute and getting the kids to be real players in it. Lots of our old folk are going but if you get the kids, with the skills that they have... The kids are excited about this and want to share it with the older folk... They have the digital skills but they don’t have an understanding of their heritage... If the communities are producing their own histories and making these available to us [as custodian] for future generations... Ulwazi needs to get the unsung heroes to talk... Just views from ordinary people and what they feel can broaden perspectives (Deputy Head of ELHD, interview, 2009 October 30).

My interpretation of “us as custodian” is derived from the fact that the Deputy Head of the ELHD saw the Ulwazi Programme as a “custodian of heritage”, as a means to prevent the loss of heritage through preservation for future generations. Unsurprisingly, in a conference presentation she gave, the Ulwazi Programme Leader articulated a similar viewpoint:

The library focuses on custodianship of the information resource – providing content management, training and support. Ordinary people from the community are actively involved in the development of content for this indigenous digital library and community participation encourages ownership which ultimately leads to knowledge sharing, skills development (Greyling, 2009: 2).

In interviews that I conducted with them, both the Programme Leader and Deputy Head of the ELHD expressed concerns over the loss of indigenous knowledge, heritage and

local culture, and the need for it to be preserved for future generations. As the Programme Leader explained:

We were made aware of the needs in the communities; their lack of digital literacy, their lack of empowerment, the lack of digital skills, the fact that their indigenous knowledge was getting lost at an alarming rate due to urban migration etc. But also, we were seeing the falling apart of the older societal structures because of the lack of transferring this knowledge from the older to the younger generation (Programme Leader, interview, 2009 October 08).

The Deputy Head of the ELHD added:

Because of my background I am biased towards the preservation part. I want to record as much of our oral histories as possible as KZN has the highest prevalence of AIDS and not just in the 23 – 40 bracket but older people who are ill and we are losing quite a lot of our heritage. And you would know with any society, it is that ability to get heritage passed on... It helps morality, it is what keeps communities together, allows them to understand where they come from... nation-building..." (Deputy Head of ELHD, interview, 2009 October 30)

Therefore, in their opinions, the chains of transmission of cultural traditions, knowledge and heritage in the communities in which the programme functions have broken down due to factors like urban migration and death through AIDS. They saw the onus on the Ulwazi Programme and the municipality to act as a custodian and preserver of indigenous knowledge and heritage, allowing participation and ownership through supposedly democratising new social technologies.

#### *Amakhosi as custodians*

Whereas the Ulwazi Programme and the municipality are mandated by government to engage in practices of custodianship, traditional leaders appeal to continuity through longstanding traditions, as well as policy and legislation, to substantiate their roles as custodians of tradition and custom. As Boyane Tshehla (2005: 10) writes:

The Houses of Traditional Leaders have been given an important role in the post-1994 democratic dispensation as the effective custodians of African tradition and culture. They act in an advisory capacity (both nationally and provincially) on issues that affect traditional communities, traditional leadership and customary law.

In KwaZulu-Natal in particular, the *amakhosi* embody traditional culture due to the emphasis placed on customary law and governance through chiefship under colonial, indirect rule and subsequently under apartheid's homeland policy. During the apartheid era, the ANC mainly steered clear of traditional matters and cultural politics and as a result, the *amakhosi* have entered the post-apartheid era largely in control of tradition and custom.

In one of our interviews, Victor Mkhize described to me his role as a mediator between irate *amakhosi*, opposing the Municipal Demarcation Act and municipal restructuring in the late 1990s: "My duty was to cool them [*amakhosi*] down and say, let us work together. If the Constitution says that traditional leaders are the custodians of their culture, we cannot do away with our identity and think things would be easy." (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2010 August 06) The Constitution makes no mention of traditional leaders as custodians of culture. However, this is expressed in the conclusions to the White Paper on Traditional Leadership and Governance (2003) and it seems to be a common perception. There are numerous examples from local, provincial and national government in which traditional leaders are cited as custodians of culture, heritage, traditions and customs. Former mayor of Durban, Obed Mlaba stated: "We value the role of traditional leaders. They are the custodians of our culture, heritage and customs." (City of Durban, n.d.) Similarly, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, former Chairman of the House of Traditional Leaders of KwaZulu-Natal, felt that the *amakhosi* were: "The custodians of

our heritage, watching over the treasury of our customs, traditions, culture, history and way of life” (Buthelezi, 2001). Former Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, Ms N.G.W Botha, noted: “Legislation that has been promulgated recognizes the role of traditional leaders (*amakhosi* and headmen) in communities and acknowledges that they are the custodians of indigenous culture” (Botha, 2006). According to the National House of Traditional Leaders and in line with the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act of 2003, the role of traditional councils, which are largely made up of traditional leaders, is to promote and preserve the culture and tradition of communities, and to administer the affairs of the traditional community in accordance with customs and tradition. In a presentation on heritage and cultural tourism as a means of economic development for rural areas, the National House of Traditional Leaders touted traditional leaders as “custodians of land, language, cultures and customs of people in most rural areas” (National House of Traditional Leaders, 2010). Recent legislation, the National House of Traditional Leaders Act of 2009, also tasks traditional leaders with “the preservation of the culture and traditions of communities” (National House of Traditional Leaders Act, no. 22 of 2009, 2009: 12).

In many ways the *amakhosi* continue to perform the roles they played during the colonial and apartheid eras – conflict resolution, as administrators of land and maintaining social and ritual aspects of life. The ethnographic data I have collected points to the perceived importance of the *amakhosi* in terms of transmitting social values, maintaining social order, administering land and safeguarding the spiritual well-being of the clan. As Victor Mkhize sums up: “[in addition to the] support and development management of his own



traditional community, the specific roles of *amakhosi*, they are broadly custodians of tradition and culture. For me, they are a symbol of African leadership.” (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2010 November 16) During the course of my fieldwork I came across various cases of the *amakhosi*’s embodied custodianship – their ability to deploy tradition and custom to carry out their functions, which is based on their authority as the descendants of important ancestors. I give examples of this in the following section.

#### *Maintaining the social fabric*

Like the Ulwazi Programme Leader and the Deputy Head of the ELHD, Victor Mkhize lamented the disintegration of the social fabric of traditional communities and their loss of cultural identity. He felt that the *amakhosi* preserved traditional practices, customs and culturally-specific ways of doing things and promoted the idea of younger generations adopting and accepting “traditional ways of living” to improve various aspects of life including health, conflict resolution, marriage and identity. As an example, he cited the *Umhlanga* or Reed Dance, an annual ceremony linked to the age regiments, which he suggested: “has cultural, religious and health concepts, young girls preserving themselves for marriage.” In his view, tradition serves to encourage young girls to preserve their virginity for marriage, which in turn combats promiscuity and prevents the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases. He felt the *amakhosi* and traditional ways of living could: “sustain traditional communities and the identity of generations to come.” (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2010 November 16)

The *amakhosi* in the Makhanya and Mkhize areas of Umbumbulu, Inkosi Khetha

Makhanya and Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize respectively, echoed these sentiments. In separate interviews, both of them explained to me that their role was one of preserving traditional ways of living for the benefit of their constituencies. Inkosi Khetha Makhanya felt that “culture doesn’t change” and that by preserving it and a particular way of living, the *amakhosi* help people to live properly. He used the terms *ukulondoloza indabuko* (to protect or keep safely traditional custom) and to live *endleni emnandi* (in a nice way) (Inkosi Khetha Makhanya, interview, 2011 January 24). Similarly, Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize stated that the *amakhosi* are: “looking after people in terms of tradition and customs. They keep traditions alive. We must keep culture alive to teach kids the right way of living.” (Inkosi Khetha Makhanya, interview, 2011 January 20)

Victor Mkhize also explained that by following a particular cultural protocol, traditional leaders could be more effective in conflict resolution than the government using “Western” means (the judicial system). He gave the example of a fight between two factions. Those involved would take their weapons and go to the *inkosi*’s house where they would leave their weapons outside. The *inkosi* would say:

Should I hear from either faction that somebody has died [been killed], I will call the police and they will arrest all of you and put you in jail. So, you will have a collective responsibility for the death. And then that conflict is solved straight away and people begin to shake hands (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2010 November 16).

Conversely, he argued that trying to resolve the conflict by “Western means” would be less effective as: “that person will be on the road the next day with the protection of the justice system because he has paid a bail, pending the investigation.” (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2010 November 16). These assertions were confirmed in discussions with Ulwazi Programme fieldworkers from the Makhanya and Mkhize areas of Umbumbulu

who felt that through traditional practices the *amakhosi* taught children to respect elders. In their opinions, the *amakhosi* functioned to provide housing, development and security through a network that included both traditional structures (*izinduna* or headmen) and municipal councillors. The fieldworkers also said that the *inkosi* played an important role in ensuring and maintaining the safety, happiness and well-being of the clan through commune with his ancestors (Bongiwe Ndlovu and Zanele Shange, interviews, 2011 June 17).

As examples of how he felt *amakhosi* could sustain the identity of traditional communities, Victor Mkhize pointed to two controversial customs, *ukweshwama* and *ukulobola*. The first, '*Umkhosi wokweshwama*' or first fruits ceremony, forms part of a thanksgiving ceremony and involves the ritual sacrificing of a bull using bare hands alone. In 2009, the Zulu king revived this contentious practice amid cries of protest from animal anti-cruelty groups. Many *amakhosi* in KwaZulu-Natal publicly supported Zwelithini, the ritual and were involved in the ceremony.<sup>7</sup> In response to opposition to the *ukweshwama* ceremony, Victor Mkhize expressed his view that an attack on this custom constituted an attack on his identity and reiterated the role of *amakhosi* as preservers of tradition and custom in present-day South Africa:

There was this conflict, the case against the King for *ukweshwama* and he will be taken to court for cruelty to animals. But if you go to Spain... With the bullfight? Because it is their tradition and culture. Once you question that, you begin to question my identity, when you begin to ask me the role of a traditional leader. I shiver because this is my identity, this is what I do. If there are *imicimbi* [ceremonies] [I am wearing *imvunulo* [traditional dress]... And you ask me why I am doing that? Yet, I don't ask other cultures why they are doing that (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2010 November 16).

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<sup>7</sup> For more on the *umko:i wokweshwama* ceremony and its revival, see Krige (1965: 249) and Rautenbach (2011).

He was similarly vocal on the issue of *ukulobola* or bridewealth negotiations. Victor Mkhize maintained that the original intention of *ukulobola* was to create a bond between two families. *Ukulobola* entails a complex, formal process of negotiation between the families of the bride and groom to arrive at a consensus on the price (traditionally paid in number of cows) that the groom must pay the bride's family. The first step is to build a relationship between the families through ritual slaughter and the exchange of gifts in the run-up to the marriage. While arguments against *ukulobola* point to that fact that once a bride is paid for, it is difficult for her to leave the marriage unless her family can repay the amount, Victor Mkhize felt that it formed an important part of creating long-term, healthy relationships and that the *amakhosi* were essential in preserving the custom. When our discussion moved to marriage and the ever more common practice of holding both traditional and non-traditional ceremonies, Victor Mkhize painted a picture of an identity-less youth who aspired to a capitalist, "Western" lifestyle, ignoring traditions and customs to their detriment:

Now we have wedding planners who are taking over now. It's no more [no longer] traditional or cultural. I can see these things are so strenuous to [for] young people... they are trying to get their identity, their tradition and custom but they cannot... Some of them end up divorcing or killing themselves because their wedding was not cool, there were no celebrities there. The wedding is between two families (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2010 November 16).

My discussions with Victor Mkhize oscillated between issues of traditional leadership, land, the Mkhizes and their neighbours and governmental intervention in traditional affairs. In the exchanges a number of these topics converged. Victor Mkhize has clearly

defined ideas about “Western” and “traditional” ways of doing things.<sup>8</sup> In our discussions, he explained in detail his views on traditional and Western government cultures and how the two do not comfortably coincide. He offered me numerous examples in which he believed government intervention had contributed negatively, and continues to do so, to the fate of the institution of traditional leadership in general and, more specifically, to the Mkhize clan. We began with the topic of land and the role the *amakhosi* perform as administrators of it.

#### *Amakhosi, land and government intervention*

Claims to custodianship of tradition and custom function as the basis for authority over land, a key source of the *amakhosi*'s power. In the present, land continues to be a contentious issue between the *amakhosi* and the government, related to the Demarcation Act of 1998, the inconsistencies of which Victor Mkhize, explained:

This thing of demarcation. Because we have got these traditional boundaries vis-à-vis local government boundaries. In terms of service delivery, how do you justify if in one ward there are four *amakhosi* and the project is placed in one area, which belongs to another *inkosi*? Is that divide and conquer or underdevelopment? (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 June 15)

Land is also a symbolic resource for the *inkosi* and his people. As Victor Mkhize explains: “When we install an *inkosi*, the only thing we do, we are saying: ‘You are hereby installed as an *inkosi*, this is the land you are going to look after, on behalf of the people.’” (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 June 15) Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize expressed a similar view, adding that “care of the land and people” was central to what *amakhosi* did

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<sup>8</sup> I am aware of the dangers of uncritically accepting simple binaries like “Western” and “traditional”. I use Victor Mkhize’s vocabulary to communicate to the reader his original language but do not adopt it as my own.

(Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, interview, 2011 June 19). Mathis (2007: 109 – 110) argues that the administration of land in Umbumbulu is a progressively more symbolic than functional role. Through her doctoral research she found that land was valued primarily for residential security and as symbolic representation rather than for productive purposes. In the general narrative of land ownership, land was seen to belong to the *inkosi* and allocated through him or his *izinduna*. However, in reality, she recorded surprisingly few incidents in which residents in Umbumbulu received land directly from the *inkosi*. Much more frequently, residents and families sub-divided their land to accommodate those looking for somewhere to stay. Nevertheless, she, alongside Beall and Ngonyama (2009), argues that legislation like the Communal Land Rights Act (2004) “appears to give a considerable amount of power and influence to customary leaders over the allocation of land in rural areas.” (2007: 112)

Authority over land is linked to a particular socio-political status and the Ingonyama Trust, which receives state funding and of which the Zulu king, Zwelithini, is the sole trustee, further complicates questions of land in KwaZulu-Natal. One of the last tasks of former State President, FW de Klerk, was his assent to the KwaZulu Ingonyama Trust Act (Act 3 of 1994). This Act decreed that Zwelithini was the sole trustee of “some 2.7 million hectares [of land] spread throughout KwaZulu-Natal”, now administered by the Ingonyama Trust Board (Ingonyama Trust Board, n.d.). Initial administrative expenses were borne by the fledgling KwaZulu-Natal provincial government. In my discussion with Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, he asserted his status as the principal chief of the Mkhize with reference to, among other things, his land. He explained that Zwelithini did not own

his land and that, hypothetically, he would not assign Zwelithini's son, also an *inkosi*, space on his land, as this would undermine his power. He also gave the example of Mbonasi Mbonyise, a speaker of the Zulu Royal Family, who requested, but was refused, an allotment on one of the Qadi *amakhosi*'s land (Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, interview, 2011 June 19).

The issue of status attached to land also surfaced in my discussions with Victor Mkhize about land in Umbumbulu (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 August 02). He described the Mkhize in terms of first comers, as benevolent leaders who provided land for their daughters, many of whom married into the families of successive sets of immigrants, fleeing expansionism and conflict within the Zulu kingdom in the north. Victor Mkhize maintained that in the past, within "traditional structures", it was understood that the land that Mkhize *amakhosi* allocated to clans into which their daughters married, remained the property of the Mkhize. However, he stressed that the government, in the form of the Department of Native Administration, distorted these practices, aligning itself strategically with other clans in what he saw as a ploy to divide and rule the Mkhize clan. In the past, immigrants from the Zulu kingdom used to *khonza* (to show allegiance or be subservient to, literally "to pay respect to" or "worship", Dent and Nyembezi, 1969: 392) the Embo (Mkhize) and become compliant subjects. He reiterated that newcomers became "part of the Embo clan. Makhanya was an *induna* of Mkhize like Shoji, Magangeni, Ximba, Ndeba and Gwala." However, as Victor Mkhize saw it, government involvement in traditional matters, structures of power and land allocation had had disruptive repercussions:

When these people used to arrive, it was like this: “I’m here because I am running away from Shaka, so I want to be your subject”. I would say: “With all your children and families, you would settle here but I would say, you are my subject.” I would make you a leader of those people [your followers] like a structure of government. You had to have a structure. That relationship was extended when you come to me and say you would like to marry my daughter. I would say: “That’s fine but this is now the land that I am giving you so that my daughter will be taken care of.” With **history**, it stays between Embo [remains Embo land] until the Native Administration came in (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 August 02).

In Victor Mkhize’s view, the Native Administration Department disrupted the existing “traditional structures” of society, by installing *iziphakanyiswa* (lit. those who were raised), those who were “installed and put there”, into positions of power: “Now when the NA [Native Administration] came in, it took that land and there were many *amakhosi* who were installed and put there without understanding the existing social structure.” (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 August 02)

Victor Mkhize and I talked about the arrival in Umbumbulu of the Mkhize’s neighbouring clan, the Makhanya. He explained that they, like others who arrived in Umbumbulu after the Mkhize, were given land as they married Mkhize women, for example, Makhutha, a past Makhanya chief. But he highlighted that this land did not belong to the newcomers and was rather:

A sign of appreciation of a relationship because they were marrying Mkhize daughters. It’s like *umphako* [*padkos*, provisions, food for the journey], a provision that you give to your daughter. Because at that time, there was a culture of polygamy so they didn’t want a child of Mkhize kingdom, or chiefdom to be worried about where she is going to get land and so on (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 August 02).

He put this sharing of land down to the generosity of the Embo, also recorded through oral traditions:

It is like, only Mkhize who had that norm, I don’t know if you call it democracy or



whatever, of giving land to people. Hence they say in *izibongo* [praises], “*Khize kaKhabazela kaMovo Sibiside esimjembele ezandla inhlama eyaphela etsheni ngoba badaphunela*”. If you are mixing dough when you are baking cakes and from this dish [grinding stone] the dough is going to be finished. Why you are giving it out? (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2010 August 06)

He also offered a more succinct version of the praise, “*Nina abenhlama eyaphelela etsheni ngoba nibadaphunela*”, which translates more clearly to: “You who are grinding flour, it will be finished on the grinding stone because you are giving it all away”.

### *Family Matters*

In our discussions, Victor Mkhize also pointed to two cases in which, in his opinion, the state intervened in traditional or clan affairs. The first incident was a result of the 1906 *Impi yamakhanda* (lit. the battle of the heads), also known as the Bhambatha Revolution, a widespread rebellion by certain *amakhosi* against the payment of a poll tax or *imali yekhanda* (meaning head money/tax). Mkhize chiefs, Tilongo and Skhukhukhu (the sons of Ngunezi), had been banished to St. Helena for their involvement in the uprising and the colonial government appointed Bubula as an acting chief because of his loyalty to the state. As Moses Hadebe (2003, 70 – 71) writes:

Surprisingly Bubula Mkhize (Ngunezi’s full young brother) and *iNkosi* Mguqula Mkhize (Ngunezi’s distant cousin) remained loyal to the colonial government during *impi yamakhanda* in 1906. Bubula was appointed *iNkosi* over a small section of abaMbo (Mkhize people) by the Natal colonial government.

The second incident took place in the early 1930s during periods of civil unrest due to a heated succession dispute between Nkasa and Thimuni, the respective sons of Tilongo and Skhukhukhu, discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Bubula, the acting chief, was in control and did not want to cede power. With the deaths of Tilongo and Skhukhukhu, Victor Mkhize felt that Bubula should have called a family meeting to discuss the

position of each son but as he commented: “Instead of calling Nkasa and Thimuni and the government in, Bubula, Nkasa and Thimuni were called in by the government. Instead of resolving it traditionally... Why didn’t Bubula convene a family meeting?” (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 August 02)

Historian, Jabulani Sithole (1997: 98 – 99), gives details of these interactions with the state, noting:

State officials convened several meetings in a bid to restore some stability in the Umlazi reserve areas [later Umbumbulu] in 1934. The Zulu regent, Prince Mshiyeni, Dr John L. Dube, the region’s most prominent Kholwa politician, and the CNC [Chief Native Commissioner], H.C. Lugg, co-operated during these peace meetings.

The current Mkhize inkosi, Kusakusa Mkhize, offers a characteristically concise rendition of events: “King Mshiyeni solved the problem between our great grandfathers, Nkasa and Thimuni. Before that, they were one tribe that Nkasa [his grandfather] ruled” (Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, interview, 2011 June 19). However, Victor Mkhize felt that the colonial state, along with the Makhanya *inkosi*, Makhutha, interfered in Mkhize chiefly matters:

It was a government intervention and until today, it is still a problem. Why? Because you brought in this Western way of doing things. Because the government will get the brief from whoever spoke English the best. In those days, it was 1934, Makhutha was speaking English the best and then he was made a traditional leader. He got his chieftainship as a result of mediating in Umbumbulu between Nkasa and Thimuni (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 June 15).<sup>9</sup>

Makhutha facilitated the meetings by providing a supposedly neutral meeting place on which the agreement was to be signed and by acting as a mediator between the English-speaking state and the Zulu-speaking chiefs. In Victor Mkhize’s view, for the role he

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<sup>9</sup> Desmond Makhanya confirmed Makhutha’s apparent proficiency in English (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2011 August 03).

played in brokering the agreement, Makhutha was richly rewarded with the status of chief, suggesting that he was an *isiphakanyiswa* or non-hereditary chief. He received large tracts of Mkhize land from the state, which he subsequently sold or gave to the government and missionaries. This, Victor Mkhize insisted, has had harmful effects on traditional authority areas, and in turn, the institution of traditional leadership, for which land is a central source of power:

He [Makhutha] was thanked for providing a venue for this meeting. Umbumbulu was given to him, yet it wasn't Makhanya land, it was Mkhize land. He did something wrong. If you go to Folweni, Toti, Queens Township, Adams Mission. If you go to Umbumbulu, past Umlazi, Umbogintwini. Are they still a traditional areas? [speaking to me] These are your sunglasses, I didn't pay for them or suffer for them and then I give them to someone. I don't know their value. Makhutha, why are you giving away land? (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 August 02)

To add insult to injury, he claimed that Makhutha also gave a gift of cattle to Prince Mshiyeni on behalf of the Embo people:

He was a sell out if you like. He offered cattle to Mshiyeni on behalf of Embo people. It's like you are nothing if I come to your rescue and then if the king has been to Embo but Makhanya gave me [him] this cattle. It's not on!" (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 August 02)

### *The Embo-Ilanga Line*

Victor Mkhize further implicated another chiefly, but not royal, lineage, the Embo-Ilanga, for what he sees as its involvement in the 1930s succession debates. He argued that the succession dispute was "confused by education" and that the Embo-Ilanga Line: "are the ones who manipulated the history of the Mkhizes. They are the people who confused this thing. They are Emfeni, Embo-Ilanga, Thamsangqa [current Embo-Ilanga chief]..." Like the Makhanya chief, Makhutha, Victor Mkhize explained that members of the Embo-Ilanga line were "slightly educated", could speak English and therefore

communicated with the lawyers who were officiating over the succession dispute between Nkasa and Thimuni. In his opinion, the Embo-Ilanga line wanted to assume power and sought to “divide them [Nkasa and Thimuni] so that it would be easy to conquer them.” (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 June 15)

Again, Victor Mkhize emphasised the influence of outsiders on the Mkhize chiefship and clan, the effect of formal education and how it allowed the Embo-Ilanga line to communicate with and manipulate, external forces in the form of lawyers and formalised government. This continues to the present and he expressed deep reservations about the potentially severe effects of this line on the Mkhize clan. Victor Mkhize explained that if the succession dispute between the Nkasa and Thimuni lines was not resolved through ritual cleansing, it could cause the current *amakhosi* of these lines (Inkosi Langalas’Embo and Inkosi Kusakusa) “to break” – for relations between them to sour. This would then offer the opportunity for the Embo-Ilanga line to step in. In reference to the acting chief in the 1930s who he believes collaborated with the government, he stated that Thamsangqa was “from a generation of Bubulas [and was] going to diminish the Mkhize chieftainship if we are not careful. If we don’t stand up.” He clarified this statement by saying that Inkosi Thamsangqa is an advocate and would take Mkhize land and farms, and sell them to investors: “In 50 years to come, you won’t find any Mkhize. We will be history. It profoundly worries me.” (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 August 02) Victor Mkhize’s allusions to education and lawyers seem to imply a consciousness of evidence based on the documentary record, how it is mobilised and operates within formal systems of government. He realises the requirement of the *amakhosi* to actively participate in

record-making in order to function productively as part of CoGTA and facilitates this process as an interlocutor between government and the *amakhosi*.

### *The Officialisation of Chiefship*

Ironically, while his work with the Amakhosi Support Office serves to enable interactions between the state and the *amakhosi*, Victor Mkhize is opposed to the idea of official intervention in traditional affairs. He qualified this by saying: "For me, we can't mix the traditional and the governmental but they are co-existing." (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 August 02) To illustrate his point, he gave the example of Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize's installation in 2010, stating that he only attended the traditional part of the ceremony. The ceremony drew a crowd of about 6000 people including prominent members of government such as the premier, Zweli Mkhize. Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize explained to me that the government contributed funds for the ceremony, including 13 cows and a further three from the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) (Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, interview, 2011 January 20). In 2011, another Mkhize *inkosi*, Langalas'Embo, held a large celebration with the Zulu king and premier to commemorate 33 years of being an *inkosi*, which Victor Mkhize also objected to on the grounds of the arbitrariness and insignificance of the number.

Nevertheless, cooperation between traditional leaders and different tiers of government is an increasingly common occurrence, not only at municipal level. As Victor Mkhize explained: "Now we have CoGTA and the Office of the King, which is under the premier. Government interacting in traditional affairs." He felt that Inkosi Bhengu

(Chairperson of Provincial House of Traditional Leaders in KwaZulu-Natal) should not perform a role in government because of his status as a chief. In his view:

*Amakhosi* are subjects of the king, a model that has been around for a long time. If the premier is in India and can't make the Reed Dance,<sup>10</sup> he says to me that it can't happen on that day because he is out of the country. You are officialising something that is not supposed to be officialised (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 June 15).

He shared his concerns about the potential effects of government intervention and the officialisation of chiefship: "Give it 20 years, you won't hear anything about chieftainships, kingdoms unless we go back to basics." (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 June 15) By going back to basics, Victor Mkhize was referring to the revival of the Bhhekuzulu College for the Sons of Chiefs and Headmen, a high school in Nongoma strictly for the children of traditional leaders. Together with the Zulu King, Inkosi Bhengu and four others (including two *amakhosi*), he has started to procure funds from the Kellogg Foundation (under their African Leadership Programme) and other sources to resuscitate the institution (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 August 02). While Victor Mkhize has deep reservations about government intervention in chiefly affairs, he seems to have few qualms about the institutionalisation of the institution of chiefship, provided it is carried out, in part, by *amakhosi*.

Through legislation and their incorporation into CoGTA, *amakhosi* in post-apartheid South Africa are increasingly subject to a democratic administration with a powerful demand for accountability through the documentary record. This is perhaps most evident in the fact that CoGTA, in conjunction with the Zulu king, now certifies the status of the

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<sup>10</sup> The Reed Dance is a traditional ceremony, one of the main objectives of which is for the king to choose another wife.

*amakhosi*. As Victor Mkhize described it: “The [Zulu] king puts that sweat in [water on] your shoulder with the reed. Then he reads your certificate and gives you a briefcase. Why are they doing that?” (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 June 15) When I asked Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize where his power as an *inkosi* came from, he pointed to the certificate from CoGTA that confirmed his chiefly status, framed and hanging on his wall next to images of his ancestors. The above might suggest that the *amakhosi*’s power is now wholly reliant on the documentary record. However, this is too simplistic an understanding of the subtle interplay between governance based on formalised record-keeping and the loosely-defined or fluid resources, in the form of tradition and custom, that have historically determined the *amakhosi*’s authority. Rather, I see in my discussions with Victor Mkhize, in the activities of the Amakhosi Support Office and in the nature of new developments driven by CoGTA, a clear recognition of the power of the documentary record but also an appreciation that control of that record is dependent on some kind of fluidity.

Various scholars have written about, and agree, on the extent to which a fluidity that is not incorporated into formal modes of archiving plays an important part in oral texts, succession practices, customary law and chiefly power (Comaroff, 1978; Hofmeyr, 1994; Hamilton, 2002). The *amakhosi*’s custodianship of tradition and custom is characterised by their ability to mould and adapt it. However, a number of studies have shown how new government legislation affecting traditional leaders has, in fact, bolstered the power of the *amakhosi* in terms of authority over land and people in rural areas (Ntsebeza, 2005; Mathis, 2007; Beall and Ngonyama, 2009). The current Traditional Courts Bill has the

potential, in one commentator's opinion, to provide "chiefs with more autocratic power than they had under apartheid" (Claassens, 2012).

However, the ethnographic data suggests that the *amakhosi* in Umbumbulu have anxieties about the potential effects of formalised local government on their power, and the ways in which it impinges on their control and use of loosely-defined traditions and customs.

Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize explained:

The power of *amakhosi* comes from tradition. The power of the *amakhosi* is now controlled by the government. Our authority has decreased. In the past if someone did something wrong, you would fine him a cow. These days, I am not allowed to fine more than R500 (Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, interview, 2011 January 20).

Inkosi Khetha Makhanya made clear that when trying local court cases (*amacala*) and disputes at the Makhanya Traditional Authority office in Umbumbulu, he did not employ tradition. In his opinion, customary law is now part of the South Africa legal system and in this context he acts as a member of the government and not in his traditional capacity (Inkosi Khetha Makhanya, interview, 2011 April 01). He added: "The *amakhosi* did everything in the past. In traditional life, before the municipality, the *amakhosi* were fulfilling role of the municipality in helping people. The *amakhosi* did things in a different way" (Inkosi Khetha Makhanya, interview, 2011 January 24). Nevertheless, by their birthrights the *amakhosi* maintain a unique position as the determiners of tradition and custom. *Amakhosi* from Umbumbulu explain that the *inkosi* is not appointed. Rather, he is "born into his authority" (Inkosi Khetha Makhanya, interview, 2011 January 24). His role is created by the *amadlozi* or ancestors and conferred to him "through the blood line" (Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, interview, 2011 January 20). While the ANC commands increasing power, the *amakhosi*, as descendants of important ancestors, also perform a



key function in everyday peoples' spiritual lives. The well-being of the clan is dependent on the happiness of the ancestors, in particular those of the *amakhosi*. As such, the *amakhosi* continue to play an important spiritual role that carries weight in peoples' everyday lives. Inkosi Mkhize explained that the *inkosi*'s ancestors could cause chaos in, or friction between, the people of the clan if they are unhappy (Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, interview, 2011 June 19).

#### *Commune with the amadlozi*

In one of my conversations with Victor Mkhize, we gravitated to the spiritual aspects of the *amakhosi*'s custodianship of tradition and custom. I asked him about the *amadlozi* or ancestors. Surely, if all were not well with the Mkhize clan, it would be struck by some kind of misfortune? In response to my query, Victor Mkhize felt that the Mkhizes had indeed been struck by misfortune and he proceeded to list a number of unfortunate incidents relating to Mkhize *amakhosi*. These included Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, the current *inkosi* of the Embo-Nkasa line:

This guy [Zwelinjani] is born by Nkasa, who was fighting with Thimuni. But he was not normal in his mind. He was like mad and in a state when this guy [current Mkhize Inkosi Kusakusa] took over *ubukhosi* [chiefship] at the age of 60 and you can see why... One day, about 10 years ago, he [Zwelinjani] carried a gun, wanting to go and shoot this guy [Kusakusa]. That couldn't happen as he went to the lavatory and as he was trying to release himself, the gun went off and shot him in the foot.

and Inkosi Thamsanqa of the Embo-Ilanga line:

Thamsanqa's wife was shot dead, his son is married to a white girl and living in America, and is saying, "No, I don't want to be an *inkosi*." Now he's running up and down to give birth to someone who can be *inkosi*." (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 June 15)

Victor Mkhize reiterated concerns about the continuation of Mkhize chiefship,

highlighting the fact that Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize only became an *inkosi* at age sixty, that he had a son outside of marriage, who is “taken care of by Thamsangqa, not living there [on Kusakusa’s land].” Inkosi Langalas’Embo of the Embo-Thimuni line also had a son out of wedlock, is divorced and his eldest son died mysteriously (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 August 02). Again, he believes that the problems plaguing the Mkhize clan are the result of government intervention in the Mkhize succession dispute, and that ritual cleansing is required in order to address these. He stated:

Where do we go from here? Let’s go to basics. Report to Zihlandlo [the Mkhize *inkosi* at the time of Shaka] that Bubula messed up, so we are asking for forgiveness, cleanse Tilongo, cleanse Skhukhukhu, cleanse Thimuni, cleanse Nkasa for fighting and then put the fact that it was a system of government caused all this and let us live in harmony (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 August 02).

Victor Mkhize further indicated that the need for ritual cleansing was not limited to the Mkhize clan alone but related to other clans in KwaZulu-Natal, including the Zulu royal family.<sup>11</sup> Krige (1965: 169 – 170) writes that through the *ukubuyisa* ceremony the spirit of the deceased is brought home from the grave to the village and incorporated into the group of ancestors. Returning to your ancestors through the *ukubuyisa* ceremony, becoming an ancestor and thereby fulfilling your duties to the living, was considered one’s final destination. However, the *ukubuyisa* ceremony cannot be performed unless the spirit is ceremoniously cleansed, a process called *ukuhlanya*, which, Victor Mkhize asserted, in the case of the historically important Mkhize chief, Inkosi Zihlandlo, has yet to be done. As he exclaimed:

You need ask LD [Inkosi Langalas’Embo] how many times we have been to Nkandla [where he believes Zihlandlo is located] and why they are failing! How

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<sup>11</sup> This was confirmed in discussion with Mbongiseni Buthelezi who said that ritual cleansing of the ancestors was a priority between smaller clans (Mbongiseni Buthelezi, personal communication, 2012 July 19).

many times they have been there to try and take Zihlandlo and they have failed because he hasn't been *ukuhlanzaed* (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 August 02).

In the following exchange Victor Mkhize laid out what he felt to be the story of the deaths of Shaka and Zihlandlo. More particularly, he explained what he felt needed to be done in order to rectify the relationship between the Zulu royal family, the Mkhize and other clans. The reference to Nkandla is linked to Victor Mkhize's insistence that the forefathers of the Zulu king decapitated Inkosi Zihlandlo whose head is still located in a room at the Zulu royal homestead in Nkandla, the details of which, he maintained, is recorded in Zihlandlo's *izibongo* (praise poems). In his opinion, Dingane tricked Zihlandlo by requesting his regiments to assist in the building of his homestead at Umgungundlovu, near Pietermaritzburg. Without the protection of his regiments, Zihlandlo was defenceless to Dingane's attack.<sup>12</sup> Victor Mkhize stated:

King Goodwill Zwelithini will not rest unless he goes to the Embo people and apologises publicly. It must be public because if you want to unify. The same thing [decapitation of their leaders] happened with the Qwabes and the Celes. Zwelithini has to do all the cleansing of all these clans (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 August 02).

Victor Mkhize explained that ritual cleansing is not a complex matter. It simply requires the calling of a traditional meeting or *imbizo*, ritual slaughtering, the burning of *imphepho* (*Helichrysum Odoratissimum*) to commune with the ancestors and apologise for past actions, and the washing of hands with water from vicinity of the Zulu royal homestead as symbolic sign of cleansing. Attempts have been made to *ukubuyisa* Zihlandlo but to no avail. Victor Mkhize reiterated that this ritual cleansing needs to take place publicly in

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<sup>12</sup> In another interview, Victor clarified that Zihlandlo's head is, in fact, in Nongoma while his body is in Nkandla Forest. He said: "We know where it was buried. I've spoken to his traditional healer. We can send archaeologists there and they can get Zihlandlo's head there. It is in Nongoma. But Zihlandlo's body is in Nkandla Forest." (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 June 15)

order to be effective and that the Zulu king's previous efforts had been insufficient to have any significant bearing on the situation: "You will start with the rituals, with correcting the history, because if he does those rituals publicly, he will be correcting the history, showing what kind of a person Shaka was, what kind of a person Dingane was." (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 August 02)

Unbeknownst to Victor Mkhize, Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize performed a cleansing ritual with the Zulu king, Zwelithini. He explained to me that he traveled to Nongoma with water from his area and met Zwelithini who had water from Nongoma. They then washed their hands in the water from each other's homes as part of a psycho-spiritual cleansing and healing ritual to rectify the wrongdoings of their forebears (Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, interview, 2011 June 19). This is another clear example of the *inkosi's* embodied custodianship of tradition and custom, and how it is perceived to contribute to his respective clan's well-being and inter-clan relations. The desire for ritual cleansing, recognition of past wrongdoings and for "correcting the history" is further crosscut by contemporary identity politics in KwaZulu-Natal in which a growing opposition to the idea of a unified Zulu nation is coupled with calls by emergent cultural movements for recognition of their pre-Zulu groups and identities. I discuss these in detail in the following chapter.

## Conclusion

Following the restructuring of municipal borders in Durban, the eThekweni Municipality and *amakhosi* operate as different parts of cooperative local government. Yet, in many cases, they function in competing roles. There is mounting pressure on the *amakhosi* to defend and preserve their roles as the primary custodians of tradition and custom. While the *amakhosi*'s performed and embodied custodianship of tradition and custom is defined by its fluidity and malleability, there is also pressure to bow to an administrative regime that calls for protocol, accountability and documentary records.

My research has shown that claims to custodianship over indigenous knowledge and heritage (on the part of the municipality), and tradition and custom (by the *amakhosi*) are relevant to the operations of power in KwaZulu-Natal as these bodies of knowledge function as important political resources. Through projects like the Ulwazi Programme, the eThekweni Municipality strives to create modern, informed citizens, as part of its efforts to develop rural and semi-rural areas. The *amakhosi*'s claims to custodianship of tradition and custom form the basis of their authority over land and their constituencies. The balance of power has shifted to the ANC and the *amakhosi* realise that an important body of knowledge they still command, indeed embody, as living descendants of lineages with direct access to the ancestors, is tradition and custom. Chiefly commune with the ancestors continues to have a bearing on everyday people's lives and the cleansing rituals and practices that the *amakhosi* perform form an important connection with the past, regulate interactions between different clans and effect psycho-spiritual healing. This is a body of knowledge of the past that the ANC government is beginning to gain access to

and officialise through projects like the Ulwazi Programme. In spite of this, the *amakhosi*, including those who are ANC-aligned, remain the primary determiners of the meaning of tradition and custom, and in a non-institutionalised environment, the custodians thereof.

#### ***Chapter Four – (Re)discovering the Correct History***

On the 9<sup>th</sup> June 2012, I drove southwards along the N2, one of the main freeways that connects Durban to the rest of the country. While this had become a near mandatory part of my doctoral fieldwork trips to Durban, the journey on that day was different. It was a Saturday, my father had decided to accompany me and we were en route to an Mkhize ceremony where, I anticipated, several strands of my research would converge. I took the turnoff, crossed the bridge over the freeway and immediately noticed the traffic. Whereas previous visits had entailed driving quiet, semi-rural dirt roads, the ceremony had attracted a large number of visitors. I navigated my way through a swathe of fancy German cars, mainly Mercedes-Benzes and BMWs, in some cases driven by shirtless men wearing *umqhele*, a headband denoting unmarried men. While this might not seem too out of place in KwaZulu-Natal, the day's activities were to prove more intriguing. The event to which I had been invited by Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, one of the Mkhize *amakhosi* in Umbumbulu, was described to me by him as an “*umsebenzi wenkosi Zihlandlo*”, which suggested ritual ‘work’ (*umsebenzi*) related to Zihlandlo, one of the most important *amakhosi* in Mkhize history. What I encountered was far different and quite unexpected.

On previous visits to what Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize described as his ‘kraal’, which comprises three rondavel<sup>1</sup> houses and an animal pen, I encountered about six people in total. When we arrived at the kraal at about 10h15, there were at least a few thousand, a number of whom were wearing Mkhize T-shirts with different illustrated images of

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<sup>1</sup> A rondavel is circular and often thatched building with a conical roof. A kraal refers to a homestead made up of a varying number of houses.

Zihlandlo's face on the front of them and slogans like "*Umlando wamaMkhize*" ("the history of the Mkhize") or Zihlandlo's praise poems on the back. The kraal was dwarfed by an enormous white tent and surrounded by more police and police vehicles than I had ever seen in my life. We passed through metal detectors, staffed by KwaZulu-Natal Office of the Premier employees, who checked cell phones, bags and men in *imvunulo* (traditional dress) offloading spears and shields. As we entered the tent, I realised that this was not in fact a traditional ceremony in which ritual '*umsebenzi*' was to take place.

Banners featuring Zweli Mkhize, the KwaZulu-Natal premier, were hung throughout the tent. A large stage, which included a podium, seating for special guests, more banners and a large South African flag, was set up in the middle of the tent and alongside it, a smaller performance area for musicians, poets and dancers. White plastic chairs were laid out in unending rows and two very large video screens, replaying a five-minute video, flanked the inside of the tent. I recognised a few of the people in the video – Siyabonga Mkhize, an Mkhize clan historian and *imbongi* or praise poet, Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize and another Mkhize chief, Inkosi EBT Mkhize. Both *amakhosi* were dressed in traditional gear and Siyabonga Mkhize wore a brown jersey and *umqhele* headband. In the video, he performed the praises of Inkosi Zihlandlo, the illustrious Mkhize ancestor who lived in Shakan times, to which the other participants responded, "Bambo thini?!" (Lit. "What do the abaMbo [Mkhize] say?"). The video gave details of the new, obelisk-shaped memorial, dedicated to Zihlandlo, which the previous week had been unveiled at Emakhabeleni near Kranskop. The text on the memorial plaque offered details of Zihlandlo's death and a few sentences explaining that one of the first Zulu kings, Shaka,



thought highly of him. The video, much like the tent, was heavily branded with the Office of the premier's logo. I noticed that neither Siyabonga Mkhize nor Victor Mkhize, introduced in the previous chapter, attended the event. This was understandable in the latter's case as he had expressed distaste for the mixing of what he considered 'traditional' and government affairs. I later learnt that the week before the event Siyabonga Mkhize had been violently attacked at his home, left for dead and was recovering in hospital. I have not been able to establish whether the attack was politically motivated or not.<sup>2</sup> Another researcher working in the area, Christoph Rippe, suggested that the attack could have been related to jealousy of Siyabonga Mkhize's social standing as the leader of his own church, the Salem City of God Church (Christoph Rippe, personal communication, 2012 July 26). Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize suggested that it was not politically motivated but did not wish to discuss the matter in great detail (Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, personal communication, 2012 August 14).

My father and I sat amongst the masses and I noticed an older man holding a book called "Zihlandlo", written by Siyabonga Mkhize, which I imagine is the first in a series of books on prominent Mkhize *amakhosi*.<sup>3</sup> As we waited, I scanned the programme of events and the speakers. The programme, titled "Unveiling of the Memorial of Inkosi Zihlandlo Mkhize", was organised by Inkosi EBT Mkhize and the premier of Gauteng, Mrs. Nomvula Mokonyane. It featured a broad array of speakers, from various Mkhize

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<sup>2</sup> The assassinations of Wandile Mkhize, the ANC Chief Whip for the Hibiscus local municipality on the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal and eThekweni regional secretary, Sbu Sibiya, "in what appeared to be politically motivated murders because of infighting over positions and access to state resources" also occurred around this time (Letsoalo, Molele and Pietersen, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> In discussion with Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, he explained that Siyabonga Mkhize had been working on a book about another important historical Mbo *inkosi*, Tilongo, provisionally entitled, "Tilongo kaNgunezi, an Odyssey of Political Resistance of abaMbo". (Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, personal communication, 2011 January 20).

chiefs, the Mayor of Durban, James Nxumalo, to the premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Zweli Mkhize, the Zulu king, Goodwill Zwelithini, and a keynote speech from the South African president, Jacob Zuma. The programme was due to start at 11h00 but we waited for about an hour and a half after this time. The performances of a few singers were interspersed with apologies for the delay from the event organisers. At about 12h30, I noticed a number of the attendees heading out of the tent. Had they had enough of waiting around? Apparently not. I scurried outside in time to see two state helicopters flying overhead and landing in a small field nearby. The president, Jacob Zuma, had made his entrance and there were two sleek, black Range Rovers waiting to collect him. With the president safely in the tent, proceedings were set to commence.

But as everyone stood and began to sing the national anthem, we were interrupted by a thunderous stomp. The Zulu king's *amabutho* (regiments) entered the tent, stamping and singing in unison. They raised their shields and sticks to the stage on which the dignitaries were seated and responded as the regiment leader called out to them. Once they were seated, we finished singing the anthem and the speeches began. Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize welcomed the crowd and thanked President Zuma for attending. Although he was not featured as a speaker, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party, also spoke. The speech of KwaZulu-Natal premier, Zweli Mkhize, expressed a desire for unity amongst the Mkhize clan, including those related to, or born of, the Mkhize. The Zulu king echoed these sentiments, emphasising the importance of clans coming together and promoting traditional values. President Zuma also championed unity, stating: "People were divided in the past. This event is a sign that people are now

free. In the past they would not be able to come together like this” (SABC, 2012). Zweli Mkhize is one of the most politically powerful people in KwaZulu-Natal, is a high-ranking member of the ANC and has a close working relationship with the Zulu king. It is therefore unsurprising that an event honouring an important Mkhize chief would have attracted high profile political figures. However, this public display of unity was at odds with what I had encountered in my research up to that point. It belied ongoing contestation over the Mkhize chiefship and a contemporary refiguration of relations between the Mkhize and the Zulu royal house in which the past was heavily contested. This shift in relations with the Zulu royal family was not limited to the Mkhizes alone. Numerous clans in KwaZulu-Natal have begun to call for recognition of their pasts and identities before they were assimilated into the Zulu kingdom, wrestling with how best to navigate these oppressed histories and how and what to present as evidence in support of their claims.

### **Siyabonga Mkhize**

Siyabonga Mkhize is one person who has played a significant part in these intra and extra-Mkhize relations. In 2007, he wrote a book in Zulu called *Uhlanga lwas’Embo: The History of the Embo People*, which records the history of the Mkhize but with a focus on the Embo-Nkasa (Isimahlā) line, of which Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize is the current *inkosi*, as the principal royal Mkhize lineage. His bid for recognition of this line has wider resonance in terms of contemporary identity politics, land and power in KwaZulu-Natal, and also with direct implications for the Zulu royal family and its control of tradition and custom. In order to understand the incentive behind the production of Siyabonga

Mkhize's book, it is important to first know about his background, his experiences and perspectives, how he came to be interested in the history of the Mkhizes, and in particular, his promotion of the Embo-Nkasa line. Therefore, in the following section, I offer an account of his life as told to me in discussions with him and with others.

Siyabonga Mkhize was born in the Umlazi township of Durban and now lives in Zwelibomvu in the Embo-Nkasa traditional authority area of Umbumbulu. He previously ran a restaurant with his family in Durban's city centre and also bakes and decorates wedding cakes as a source of extra income. His interest in Mkhize clan history was piqued while working as a producer on different radio programmes, researching Zulu clan histories at the Khwesi Community Radio Station (from 1995 – 2002), which broadcast from the Kwasizabantu Mission in Kranskop and then at the Umbumbulu community radio station, Imbokodo (from 2002 – 2003). At both stations he was the producer of family history programmes, "Iziko" and "Kusadliwa Ngoludala"<sup>4</sup> respectively and it was there that he developed an interest in studying family histories (Siyabonga Mkhize, interview, 2009 December 03). In an article that he published online, Siyabonga Mkhize recounted how listeners used to ask questions about their origins, which inspired him to look into the history of his own people, the Mkhizes, of which his knowledge is seemingly extensive. As he writes:

This caused me to start researching the origins of the Nguni people and of some of the groups who form part of the Nguni-speaking people of South Eastern Africa of whom my clan, abaMbo, is a branch. I worked on the history of the Zulu royal family. When it was complete, I decided to study the abaMbo. It was the year 1999 when I started my journey through the family of Mkhize. I had a goal that I wanted

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<sup>4</sup> "Iziko" means hearth or fireplace, a place where families would share stories. "Kusadliwa Ngoludala" means, "the past still nourishes".

to collect the clan history and compile a book that would be published and used by our people and serve as a reference for future generations (Mkhize, 2010).

Through discussions with his aunt and her father, Siyabonga Mkhize learnt that his grandfather was related to Zihlandlo, “the big friend of Shaka”, the Mkhize leader during the reigns of Zulu kings, Shaka and Dingane. This discovery caused him to investigate his family tree in far greater detail. His research, which he described to me as a hobby, entailed spending long hours at various libraries and archives, including the Pietermaritzburg Archives, where renowned Zulu historian, Professor Jeff Guy, met him and was intrigued by the type of genealogical work he was doing (Siyabonga Mkhize, interview, 2009 December 03).

Mwelela Cele, who was the reading room librarian at the Killie Campbell Africana Library when I was doing my research, explained that Guy considered Siyabonga Mkhize to be an “indigenous historian” – an historian that he felt had far greater linguistic and cultural access to the history than he as a “non-indigenous historian” could (Mwelela Cele, interview, 2011 January 17). When Guy became a Research Fellow at the Killie Campbell Library in 2005, he suggested that they introduce some indigenous historians. He consulted with staff at the library and, in 2006, offered Siyabonga Mkhize a short-term position working as a researcher and translator on his research project on the centenary of the Bhambatha Rebellion of 1906, the result of which was Guy’s *Remembering the Rebellion: The Zulu Uprising of 1906* (2006). In that year, Siyabonga Mkhize also completed an oral history course with the Department of History at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. During his time at the library, he had access to many rare

manuscripts and historical texts, which he utilised in writing articles on his family history, including one entitled “*Ikhanda’nglish*” or “English head”, about a white ancestor who had a relationship with his great grandmother. His research on the Mkhize culminated in the publication of his book, *Uhlanga lwas’Embo*, in 2007 (Siyabonga Mkhize, interview, 2011 March 29).

Yvonne Winters, the current head of the Killie Campbell Library, described how between 2006 and 2008, Siyabonga Mkhize worked variously as a data capturer (he had previous experience doing this for the national telecommunications company, Telkom), helping with the organisation of exhibitions and workshops, and when the education officer left in 2008, taking people on guided tours of the library. He also assisted visitors, including lawyers and members of different clans who came to the library with claims to land or royalty, to locate texts and other resources. Winters explained that Siyabonga Mkhize is very religious and that his dreams often led him to the history of his ancestors. Dreams in Zulu culture traditionally function as a portal to the spiritual realm and a mode of communication in which the *amadlozi* or ancestors communicate coming events and dangers, expressing their desires, and imparting knowledge and advice (Berglund, 1976: 37, 99, 197). In 2009, Siyabonga Mkhize had a calling and left to start his own church. He is the founder and leader of the Salem City of God Church, based in Zwelibomvu, Umbumbulu and Richmond (Yvonne Winters, interview, 2011 March 28). He also serves as one of three *izimbongi* or praise poets of Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, the *inkosi* of the

Embo-Nkasa traditional authority area.<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting Siyabonga Mkhize's broad range of activities across a multitude of media and forms, as well as the different social identities he employs in different contexts. His roles and activities and the various media forms he uses resist simple dichotomies – he is simultaneously a Christian and a traditionalist, an oral poet and producer of written texts online and in the form of a book, and, as I argue in the chapter, a custodian of the past and a producer of history.

In my discussions with him, Siyabonga Mkhize purported to be able to trace the arrival of the abaMbo grouping to South Africa in the sixteenth century where, he maintained, it separated to form new yet genealogically related clans. He further suggested that DNA testing might be used to corroborate the claims (Siyabonga Mkhize, interview, 2011 March 29). Indeed, according to Yvonne Winters, Siyabonga Mkhize and another Mkhize colleague from the Killie Campbell Library got their DNA tested at the Alan Paton Human Genome Centre (Yvonne Winters, interview, 2011 March 28). Siyabonga Mkhize's particular interest is the Mkhize who settled in what is now Umbumbulu. He has a seemingly deep historical understanding of dates, names and events pertaining to the Mkhizes in Umbumbulu, including their migration from the former Zulu kingdom in the north, areas where other Mkhizes settled en route, when they arrived in Umbumbulu, who they defeated in order to establish themselves in the region, whom they gave land to (and how this has influenced the contemporary make up of Umbumbulu), Mkhize lineages and the organisation of what he considers to be the principal Mkhize royal house.

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<sup>5</sup> Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize presides over seven municipal wards, namely Mgangeni, Ndaya, eCobeni, eMpangisa, eMpandweni, eSutsheni, KwaZwelibomvu. He has three *izimbongi* in different wards. Siyabonga Mkhize is the *imbongi* for the KwaZwelibomvu area.

When I first met with him at his house in Zwelibomvu, my initial urge was to name him an historian due to his production of an Mkhize clan history in his book, subtitled, “The history of the Embo people”. However, as is described in the following exchange, I was alerted to his custodial tendencies and to the unclear distinction in his practice between custodianship and the production of a version of history. Siyabonga Mkhize described his historical work on the Mkhize through the analogy of a pot:

Siyabonga Mkhize: The pot, it’s a broken *ukhamba* [clay pot]. Now I’m getting different pieces from different places. I am joining them together to get a shape how it used to look like. That’s what I’m doing. Then those people who are educated will take from there, then they will do whatever.

Grant McNulty: So you are making the resource, you're not doing the research?

Siyabonga Mkhize: What I'm doing, I'm doing the resource for the people that will be doing the research, because I'm collecting this information, because I know it's difficult for them to understand us (Siyabonga Mkhize, interview, 2009 December 03).

On the one hand, Siyabonga Mkhize claims to convene pieces of disparate information in order to constitute the whole and to preserve it for others’ use, which suggests a custodial role. Yet, on the other, he claims to reconstitute the *ukhamba* into the shape it “used to look like”, a seemingly neutral re-assemblage of the pot. I read this as a reconstruction of the past that is already inflected with his curatorial hand in the selection and production of a particular Mkhize past, focussing on the Embo-Nkasa line and substantiating claims of Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize as the head of the principal royal house.

The introduction to his book reiterates a custodial and preservatory inclination similar to that of the Ulwazi Programme: “I now see that the loss of this history with the passing



from this world of old people who know old stories, I realised that it was worthwhile that I bring this history together.” But also of an authoritative history, as he writes to members of the Mbo grouping: “I give you this book, saying: ‘Take this mirror, look at it and know who you are.’” Yet, Siyabonga Mkhize is also aware that the history he has produced is not neutral and may be a source of contention: “I only know that people do not all take the same direction like water, there are those who will be grateful for this history but also those who will be opposed to it.” (Siyabonga Mkhize 2007: 7 – 8) In the original Zulu, he uses a strong verb, *ukuhlaba*, which means to pierce, stab, kill or slaughter (the history he has written).

Siyabonga Mkhize is an *imbongi* or praise poet of Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, a role that features both custodial and creative aspects. In his book and during performances he uses *izibongo* (personal praises) to trace Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize’s lineage and to back up claims for his chiefship. *Izibongo* are “a form of oral poetry which outlines the feats, character, physical and personality features of the person or thing about whom or which they are composed.” (Turner, 1997: 57) In performing as an *imbongi*, Siyabonga Mkhize draws on a long tradition of oral poetry, referencing earlier kings and royal ancestors, whose praises are often quoted or referred to in praises of the current *inkosi*. On *izibongo* and the *imbongi*, Cope (1968: 27 – 28) writes:

the praise-poem requires a specialist for its composition and proper performance. The specialization is more in the performance than in the composition, for the composition of a praise-poem is a matter of collection and perfection rather than of creation... Although he may vary the order of the sections or stanza, he may not vary the praises themselves. He commits them to memory as he hears them, even if they are meaningless to him, as they sometimes are when they have been handed down for generations.

Even though he questions their accuracy due to the nature of praising, Cope maintains that the core elements of *izibongo* are formulaic and unchanging, a record of historical events available for the *imbongi* to draw upon during his performance. From this we can suggest that they constitute a form of archive, a preserved record of past events and people. We can further posit that the *imbongi* is a custodian of this archive, a specialist with unique access but also a preserver of a form of oral tradition and history. Cope goes onto to explain that although *izibongo* feature both praise and criticism, “the purpose of the poem is to praise its subject as favourably as possible” and that “unfavourable qualities tend to be overlooked, for the praise-poem is biased towards praise” (33). This points towards the selective and productive aspects of praise poetry, in which the *imbongi* shapes perceptions of the present-day *inkosi*, deciding which aspects of his history and character should be included or left out. Similarly, Turner (1997: 57), writing nearly 30 years after Cope, on the dynamic and transformational nature of praising in contemporary Zulu society, argues for “the fluidity of this form of oral tradition which is able to change its focus in order to accommodate the changing needs of the people...” In another study, Gunner and Gwala (1991:7) write, “praise poetry is a genre that has been and still is extremely open to appropriation by those who had or wished to have access to political power and influence.” These latter points raise the question of production. While historical events and people are referenced and repeated in core formulae, this form of oral poetry also lends itself to selective representation, political motives and the production of a particular history. In the case of Siyabonga Mkhize, it reveals yet other ways in which the lines between custodianship and the production of a version of history are considerably intertwined. Siyabonga Mkhize’s roles as an *imbongi* and author point to

his active curation of a particular Mkhize past. His activities include the preservatory aspects of custodianship – in conversation with me and in his book he expressed a desire to safeguard the past in oral and written forms (Siyabonga Mkhize, interview, 2009 December 03). However, despite his claims of unifying the Mkhize, he advanced the Embo-Nkasa line as the principal royal Mkhize house, highlighting selected historical figures, their achievements and histories, and understating those of others. Therefore, together with his custodial impulse, there is evidence of his curatorial intervention in the selection, ordering and public presentation of materials in a particular way to communicate a specific meaning about the past, a curated version of Mkhize history.

*Uhlanga lwas'Embo: The History of the Embo People*

When I first met with Siyabonga Mkhize, he claimed to have gathered the historical information in his book by consulting with older people connected to the Mkhizes in a number of different areas in KwaZulu-Natal. He explained that he then cross-referenced and validated this information with texts like the published *The James Stuart Archive of Recorded Oral Evidence Relating to the History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Peoples* (1976 – 2001), the *Annals of Natal 1495 – 1815* (1888) written by colonial civil servant, John Bird, and other archival materials, predominantly from the Pietermaritzburg Archives and the Killie Campbell Collections, which he had access to during his time at the Killie Campbell Library:

Now what I'm telling you I have studied already, but I've done the history, visiting old people, collecting and interviewing as you are doing now. Then I had to go and validate what I have got from them to check whether there is nothing [anything] written about it. Then I found some stuff, like the Bird's Annals (Siyabonga Mkhize, interview, 2009 December 03).

Although the bibliography of his book includes four volumes of *The James Stuart Archive*, as well as various, well-known texts on early Zulu chiefdoms, for example, Wright and Manson's *The Hlubi Chiefdom* (1983), A.T. Bryant's *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (1929) and Nathaniel Isaacs's *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa* (1836), there is no reference to these in the actual text. That is not to say that he did not use them.

In my discussions with Siyabonga Mkhize it became apparent to me that he did in fact employ written materials to corroborate what he had collected but did not reference them in his book. Indeed, he acknowledged the power of the written record to validate key pieces of Mkhize history. For example, on the apparently peaceful agreement between the Zulu king, Shaka, and the Mbo chief, Inkosi Zihlandlo, he stated: "There are archives and things that were written about that, they had an agreement" (Siyabonga Mkhize, interview, 2009 December 03). Siyabonga Mkhize also urged me to read Nathaniel Isaacs's book *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa* (1836) as he believed it recorded valuable information about Mkhize history, in this case, details of Inkosi Zihlandlo's homestead, that were otherwise unrecorded: "Luckily enough, as our tradition doesn't tell us, because people didn't know about it but there was a white person [Nathaniel Isaac] that used to visit us in those days who recorded that." (Siyabonga Mkhize, interview, 2009 December 03)

Siyabonga Mkhize's book is overtly and clearly a popular history written for Zulu-speaking readers, with all the apparatus of a 'history' including a bibliography. However,

a close reading of *Uhlanga lwas'Embo* reveals that it is, in fact, a placing on record of a particular version of the past that is in circulation and contained in oral forms. The elevated position that Siyabonga Mkhize accords oral forms of history is clear. In discussions with me, he explained that the Mkhize clan's history was preserved through praise poems such as *izithakazelo* (clan praises), *izibongo zamakhosi* (chiefly praises) and *amahubo esizwe* (clan 'anthems') (Siyabonga Mkhize, interview, 2009 December 03). His book is, in effect, a written extension of his role as an *imbongi*. In the text there is no reference to written works or archival sources although it is apparent that he used them. Rather, the book relies heavily on, and indeed, reproduces in textual form, the *izibongo* (personal praises) of various Mkhize *amakhosi*, notably those of the Embo-Nkasa line. There are some similarities between *Uhlanga lwas'Embo* and Magma Fuze's book, *Abantu Abamnyama Lapa Bavela Ngakona* (1922), which recorded a particular version of the past, sought to engage a broader audience through the written word and made the transition from an oral to literary culture. Like Fuze's book, *Uhlanga lwas'Embo* complicates easy dichotomies between oral and written forms of history, and raises questions about the overlap between the two in the production of such a text.

It is significant that Siyabonga Mkhize chose to include references to written works in his bibliography and to produce a book, commonly seen as a stable and concrete, written record. This suggests that, recognising and acknowledging the power of the written record as a mechanism to validate the past, he sought to place his work in the company of written academic work and archival materials, as written archive. Parallels can be drawn with Dishon Kweya's (2011) work on the practices of Hezekiah Ong'ondo, a community

historian who used literate technologies to express his local knowledge of the Nyole clan of Western Kenya. Kweya traces the various possibilities these technologies offer in the performance of Nyole pasts and to engage unresolved issues of ethnic identity of some Nyole clans, analysing the diverse strategies and purposes to which these technologies were deployed in order to make a claim on the past and for land. As he writes: “Whereas the verbal discourses may generate ways of knowing, and expressing power, the real seat of postcolonial power is the bureau, the locus of writing” (208).

Siyabonga Mkhize’s book is a published work with its own ISBN number, a 146-page A5 text including praise poems and bibliography. The title, *Uhlanga lwas’Embo*, means the “reed of those of the place of Mbo”. The reed symbolises a starting point or creation and refers to the origin of the Mbo or Mkhizes. The book is divided into 13 sections, including *Uhlanga lwas’Embo* (which deals with the origins of the Embo people), *Umbuso wasEmbo ususenKandla* (the Embo Kingdom at Inkandla), *Ukumiswa kombuso eNgilayenyoni* (the establishment of a new kingdom in the colony of Natal), *Isiphithithi embusweni wasEmbo* (lit. the ‘mess’ of the Embo Kingdom, which details arguments over the chiefship of the Mkhize), *Abantwana basEmbo nezindlu zabo* (the ‘children’ of Embo and their houses, which records the common ancestry of Mkhize family members), *AmaMkhize lapho etholakana lapho* (the dispersion of the broader Mkhize grouping and where they are now found), *Izibongo ezavela kwaMkhize* (lit. the clan names that come from the place of Mkhize, which discusses other clans that have been incorporated into the Mkhize), *Izindlu zamakhosi asEmbo* (the different houses of the Mkhize chiefs), *Izibongo amakhosi asEmbo* (chiefly praise poems), *Amahubo asEmbo* (clan ‘anthems’)

and *Izinsuku ezibalulekile emlandweni wasEmbo* (important dates in Embo history, almost entirely the installation and deaths of Mkhize chiefs). The book features a number of photographs of recent clan celebrations, current chiefs and Mkhize family members, as well as historic photographs of former Mkhize chiefs, most probably copied from records at the Pietermaritzburg Archives and the Killie Campbell Library, although there is no reference to their origin. *Uhlanga lwas'Embo* also contains various maps and lineage diagrams, detailing what Siyabonga Mkhize sees as the principal houses of a number of Mkhize families, including the three royal houses, Embo-Thimuni, Embo-Nkasa and Embo-Langa.

In conversation with Siyabonga Mkhize he explained that although there are three royal Mkhize houses, they are one family, “our history is one”. With his book, he wanted to unite the Mkhizes under one chief:

The reed and it also means the root, the one [those] that are coming from the same stem. That means the stem from Embo. That means all those branches that are coming from this main stem Embo, then I'm trying to take [bring] them together... [with] *Uhlanga Lwas'Embo* I have been trying to collect all the chiefs, *amakhosi asEmbo* [chiefs of Embo], call them together and make them as one family and check who is their senior house (Siyabonga Mkhize, interview, 2009 December 03).

This desire for unification is also expressed, in a broad sense, in the introductory sections of his book where he discusses the origins of the Mbo in Swaziland, offering the genealogy of the Ngwane (Swazi) kings and *izibongo* (in this case, surnames) of Swazi origin. He writes that a number of Mkhize were scattered all over Africa, became part of many different nations and many did not realise that they were Mbo (Mkhize, 2007: 17).

This motivation, a unifying project, and the subtitle of the book as “the history of the Embo people”, belies the fact that the book is a selective interpretation of the clan past.

*Uhlanga Lwas'Embo* is dominated by a discussion of chiefs from the eighteenth century to the present with pages 16 – 68 (one third of the entire book) focussing on the history of the Mkhize chiefs, their characteristics, deeds, homesteads and offspring, and their roles in events related to the broader clan history. Importantly, significant attention is given to Embo-Nkasa lineage and each section on a particular chief is followed by his *izibongo* or praise poems. In the book, Siyabonga Mkhize traces the early eighteenth-century Mkhize migration from Swaziland to the Lubombo Mountains (in the present-day Mpumalanga Province) under Inkosi Sibiside, who he maintains conquered other “Nguni nations” to establish the Embo kingdom (17). He then goes on to give details of how Sibiside’s son, Inkosi Mavovo, resettled the Mkhize clan in Nkandla. The strength of the Mkhize clan grew during the reign of Inkosi Zihlandlo, Mavovo’s son, who, Siyabonga Mkhize asserts, had a strong relationship with Shaka and was able to build an *isigodlo* that equalled that of the Zulu king’s (27, 32). The use of the term *isigodlo* is significant. Hamilton (1998: 217) defines *isigodlo* as “the king’s or chief’s private enclosure” but also as the women of the king’s establishment, including those presented to him as tribute. Elsewhere, she refers to it as one of the “marks of kingship”, alongside holding *umkhosi* or *umkhosi wokweshwama*, the ‘first fruits’ ceremony that formed part of the thanksgiving celebrations over which the Zulu king presided (82). The term therefore symbolises a certain status and by insisting that Zihlandlo had an *isigodlo* that rivalled Shaka’s, Siyabonga Mkhize is making a claim for Zihlandlo’s kingly status and the



existence of an Mkhize kingdom. Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize reiterated this status, explaining to me: “Only the Zulu and Embo do *ukweshwama* and have *izigodlo* [pl. of *isigodlo*]. Mine is Isimahla [Embo-Nkasa].” (Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, interview, 2011 January 20) According to Siyabonga Mkhize, relations soured between Zihlandlo and Shaka’s successor, Dingane, who subsequently murdered the Mkhize chief (Mkhize, 2007: 35 – 36). In about 1840, the Mkhizes migrated southwards and established the *isigodlo*, eNgilayenyoni, under Zihlandlo’s son, Inkosi Singele. The author reinforces the position of Singele as the ruler of all of the Embo, which was then conferred to his son, Inkosi Ngunezi (of the Embo-Nkasa line).

It is in the section of the book titled, *Isiphithiphithi embusweni wasEmbo*, or “The mess of the ruling of those of the place of Mbo”, that Siyabonga Mkhize advances the Embo-Nkasa lineage as the principal royal house of the Mkhize. Although he offers details of the founding fathers of the clan in the previous sections, it is only the biographies of those chiefs that he considers to be of the principal royal lineage (Embo-Nkasa) that are recorded from this point onwards. The author writes that when Inkosi Ngunezi died in 1894, a succession dispute arose between his sons, Skhukhukhu and Tilongo. The family took the matter to Inkosi Ngangezwe, Ngunezi’s elderly uncle, who confirmed that Skhukhukhu, the son of MaQiko, was the *inkosi yomuza*, the head of the homestead, a leader at a local level. Tilongo, on the other hand, was the *inkosi yohlanga*, the “chief of the reed”, or the “original chief” of all Mbo people and the rightful heir to the principal Mkhize royal house. As Siyabonga Mkhize states in his book: “Bese kuthi uTilongo iNkosi yohlanga lwaseMbo... Njengoba bekunjalo ngaphambili koNgunezi noSingele,

bebebusa izwe lonke, ekhona amakhosi eziNdlu”, which I translate as, “And it was said that Tilongo was the *inkosi yohlanga* of the Embo... As it had always been, in the times of Ngunezi and Singele, they [as *inkosi yohlanga*] ruled over the whole nation but there were also chiefs of the homesteads [*inkosi yomuza*].” (55) I read this statement as Siyabonga Mkhize promoting Tilongo as the ruler of all Embo people, the *inkosi yohlanga*, and Skhukhukhu merely as a lesser *inkosi yomuza*. This section of the book traces the Embo-Nkasa line, offering details of subsequent Embo-Nkasa *amakhosi* and their chiefly praises. For example, Inkosi Nkasa kaTilongo, who the author maintains was appointed the principal Mbo chief on 23 April 1930 and Inkosi Zwelinjani kaNkasa, who was the *inkosi* until his death in 2006. The book does not give details of the current Embo-Nkasa *inkosi*, Kusakusa Mkhize, who was only appointed after it was published. Although he marshalled oral evidence in the writing of his book, Siyabonga Mkhize entered these oral texts into the record in a fixed, written form, which, like the archival sources he included in the book’s bibliography, offered a type of validation but also opened them up to critique. As we will see in the following section, his written history elicited a heated reaction from another Mkhize faction and contributed to sustained contestation over the interpretation of the clan history.

### **Intra-Mkhize disputation**

Siyabonga Mkhize’s book makes only passing reference to the ongoing Mkhize succession dispute, including the fact that Mkhize chiefs, Nkasa and Thimuni (of the Embo-Thimuni line), were appointed as co-chiefs in the early 1930s. In order to better understand the terms of the debate, the ways in which the past was mobilised to make

claims for the principal royal house, and what the potential benefits of these claims were, it is useful to trace the history of the dispute. Historian and senior lecturer at the UKZN History Department in Pietermaritzburg, Jabulani Sithole, who has conducted extensive research on the Mkhize succession contest, writes that Ngunezi died on 20 September 1894 before appointing his chief wife, the bearer of the next chief, leading to a succession dispute between his sons, Skhukhukhu and Tilongo. In his account, Ngunezi's mother was called upon in her capacity as the eldest member of the Mkhize family to resolve the dispute and pronounced Skhukhukhu as the hereditary heir to the chieftaincy. In 1895, the state intervened and recognised both contenders as co-chiefs but in November of that year, appointed an acting chief or *ibambela*, Bubula, as it felt that Skhukhukhu was too young to assume the role. In the subsequent years Skhukhukhu's supporters reacted by alienating Bubula who increasingly relied on the support of the colonial government and white commercial farmers. In 1906, the state charged Skhukhukhu and Tilongo with sedition and public violence for their supposed roles in the Bhambatha Rebellion and they were imprisoned at St Helena, an island in the South Atlantic Ocean that the British government used as a place of exile. They were released in 1910 and, stripped of their chiefly status, returned to Natal as commoners. Tilongo died in 1919 and Skhukhukhu in 1926 (Sithole, 1998: 48 – 55).

Land shortages in the early 1920s began to create a political crisis in the Umlazi Reserve (as Umbumbulu was then known). Sithole's MA thesis shows how the colonial government's handling of disputes over land brought together the long-simmering succession debate within the Mkhize chieftaincy and competition over access to scarce

land resources. In the face of increasing urbanisation and class-based resistance politics, the government implemented a policy of re-tribalisation, officialised in the 1927 Native Administration Act. State efforts to amalgamate previously fragmented chiefdoms intersected with the Umlazi Reserve dwellers' desire for recognition of hereditary Mkhize chiefs, Nkasa and Thimuni, the respective sons of Tilongo and Skhukhukhu. Partly due to the pressure reserve dwellers exerted on the state but also because of its policy of re-tribalisation, the state re-opened the issue of the Mkhize succession debate in 1928 (1998: 65). In April 1930, the Native Affairs Department (NAD) recognised Nkasa as the principal Mkhize chief in the area, an appointment that Thimuni's followers challenged. In October 1931, the NAD retracted its decision and called for the co-chieftaincy of Thimuni and Nkasa, demarcated boundaries for each chiefdom and ordered reserve dwellers to move to their 'correct', newly demarcated chiefdom.<sup>6</sup> While Thimuni and his followers responded positively to the reversed decision, Nkasa and his followers were opposed to it and refused to move. This sparked sporadic outbreaks of violence, which escalated into larger conflicts that included hut burning and attacks on women and children. These conflicts continued regularly until mid-1936 when the Native Commissioner for the district facilitated peace meetings between chiefs Thimuni, Nkasa and their followers in Pinetown and at Adam's Mission (Sithole, 1997: 94 – 100).<sup>7</sup>

Sithole (1992: 46, 57) argues that there were clearly political reasons for different people's participation in the violence that erupted between the two sections of the

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<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the Native Affairs Department during this period, see Dubow (1986).

<sup>7</sup> See Sithole (1998), particularly Chapter 3, for a more detailed account of the history of these conflicts. While his work concentrates on the period from 1920 – 1936, there were violent outbreaks before and after this period.

Mkhizes in the early 1930s. He maintains that everyday people who “could not afford to lose land resources because their livelihood depended on them”, used violence, hut burnings and destruction of property as a political strategy to drive opponents out of specific territories. For the chiefs, Nkasa and Thimuni, violence served to defend their material possessions and political positions. In the context of diminishing land resources and the widespread drought that plagued the southern parts of the region at that time, land was an important material resource for the chiefs and their followers. It also served as a political resource, symbolising the chief’s authority over certain areas of land and people. State recognition as the chief of the principal royal house of the Mkhize was also a status that brought with it the potential to gain access to state resources and develop a good relationship with the government. This is exemplified by the case of Bubula who ascended to the position of acting chief in place of the young Skhukhukhu, Thimuni’s father, in 1894. He was loyal to the government and enjoyed a long and uninterrupted period in office, which included benefits such as large tracts of land and the support of the government in the face of opposition from Thimuni’s supporters, many of whom lived in his chiefdom (1998: 72 – 76).

The publication of Siyabonga Mkhize’s book contributed to an ongoing, contemporary struggle between (at least) two Mkhize factions over the interpretation of the clan history and its rightful leader. His version of the history of the Mkhizes in Umbumbulu has been hotly contested by Victor Mkhize, an Mkhize of a different lineage, who felt that Siyabonga Mkhize’s research and book was biased and favoured his (Embo-Nkasa) line.

In my discussions with him, Victor Mkhize recalled an early meeting with Siyabonga Mkhize on the subject of the Mkhize succession debate:

I don't like the approach, the book Siyabonga Mkhize published. I sat down with him and said because you are gifted with poetry and oral history... I referred him to Killie Campbell because I said I don't have time to look at this with the assignment of bringing together 17 traditional communities into the municipality (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2010 August 06).

Victor Mkhize has a vested interest in, and seemingly deep knowledge of, the history of the Mkhize. As sources of historical knowledge he cited his aged father, his cousin (an Mkhize *inkosi* of the Ilanga line), texts from the Killie Campbell Library and a researcher from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, who has been investigating the origins of the Mkhize from Swaziland. In the future, Victor Mkhize said that he plans to write a revised and less biased history of the Mkhizes to contest that of Siyabonga Mkhize. In order to better understand the terms of the debate, it is useful to briefly consider what Victor Mkhize opposes in the historical account that Siyabonga Mkhize has produced. The primary inconsistency he found was his focus on the Embo-Nkasa (Siyabonga Mkhize's) line as the principal royal house and his neglect of the others, in particular the Embo-Thimuni line, which Victor Mkhize intimated could be the correct royal lineage. He explained:

If you talk Isimahla [Embo-Nkasa], you are talking: Kusakusa [current leader] – Zwelinjani – Nkasa – Tilongo – Ngunezi. When Ngunezi's second wife, MaQiko [Embo-Thimuni line] didn't give birth to a boy child [heir], the Embo community looked for another wife. One from Swaziland, MaMswati, came and gave birth to Tilongo [Embo-Nkasa line]. MaQiko then gave birth to Skhukhukhu [Embo-Thimuni line and first born son of first wife] three to five years later (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2010 August 06).

With this explanation, I believe that Victor Mkhize is pointing to the fact that although Skhukhukhu was born after Tilongo, he was born of the first wife (MaQiko) and is

therefore the rightful heir.<sup>8</sup> This is in opposition to Siyabonga Mkhize's assertion that Tilongo should have taken up the Mkhize chiefship as the *inkosi yohlanga* or principal chief of all the Mkhizes.

Victor Mkhize continued by elaborating on how he felt he was uniquely positioned to comment on, and intervene in, the succession debate, based on what he considered to be the traditional makeup of the homestead. He explained that the powerful role of *ikhombabukhosi* – one who points to royalty or chieftaincy (from *ukukhomba*, to point, and *ubukhosi*, royalty or chieftaincy), was one that his forebears had traditionally performed due to the structure and numbering of the Mkhize royal houses: "There is one house that is identified as *ikhombabukhosi*, people who identify the *inkosi*, to say, this is the *inkosi*. *Ikhombabukhosi* is always *ikhohlo* [left-hand wife], the second house." Victor Mkhize made clear that this role had been in his family for generations and he believed that it was his role in the present: "My great grandfather, Vayi, was an *ikhombabukhosi* because our house is number 22. So it's an even number, which means that we are a second house." He fulfilled this role by calling a meeting between Siyabonga Mkhize and the KwaZulu-Natal premier, Zweli Mkhize:

We [which I read as *ikhombabukhosi*] can say to Kusakusa [Embo-Nkasa line], no, you are not right in what you are doing. Like what we did when this guy [Siyabonga Mkhize] was producing that book. We invited a meeting and in that meeting I stood up and said to Zweli, please keep quiet, Zweli, and I said to this guy, Siyabonga, please keep quiet. Now as far as I know, that the lineage of *ubukhosi*, three houses go like this and this..." (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 June 15)

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<sup>8</sup> Sithole (1998: 51) also maintains that Skhukhukhu was recognised as the heir to the Mkhize chiefship and offers a detailed discussion on claims for Mkhize chieftaincy in Umbumbulu (47 – 55).

It is important to note the way in which, through the declaration of his status as an *ikhombabukhosi*, Victor Mkhize also asserted a custodial role. Like his forebears, he is a custodian of the historical knowledge and practices associated with that role. While I initially considered him an interlocutor between local government and the *amakhosi*, it was only when he claimed this role that I became aware of his custodial tendencies. Based on his version of tradition and custom, he was able to point to royalty as an *ikhombabukhosi*. Yet, Victor Mkhize also recognised that Siyabonga Mkhize possessed another form of custodial capacity (by virtue of his status as a praise poet) and that the custodianship of oral materials afforded him a different view of the past. I have not come across the role of *ikhombabukhosi*. Ethnographic studies such as Krige's *Social System of the Zulus* (1965) and Berglund's *Zulu Thought Patterns and Symbolism* (1976) make no mention of it, even though Krige (1965: 176 – 183) provides a very detailed account of the layout of the Zulu homestead, inter-house relations and succession protocol.

Siyabonga Mkhize's book is an intervention into a long-standing, and as yet, unresolved, chiefly succession debate between the Nkasa and Thimuni lineages around which, Victor Mkhize explained, there is ongoing intra-Mkhize debate in which Zweli Mkhize, the premier, is involved (Victor Mkhize, interview, 2011 June 15). With his book, Siyabonga Mkhize recorded a version of the history of the Mkhize people and claims for the principal royal house.<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to note that although different versions of the past circulated in oral form, it was only once Siyabonga Mkhize committed his version to

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<sup>9</sup> I gathered from discussions with Mwelela Cele that Siyabonga Mkhize was uncomfortable with, and had reservations about, some of the versions of Mkhize history that were already recorded, including those in the Killie Campbell essay competition. In the early to mid twentieth century, Killie Campbell and her father ran essay competitions for local Zulu and Sotho speakers to record their family histories (Mwelela Cele, personal communication, 2011 April 06).



print, that it elicited such a determined response from Victor Mkhize and others. The contestation surrounding Siyabonga Mkhize's work has led to him withdrawing his book from circulation. I contacted the book's publisher, a small and local publishing house that aims to make accessible the stories and histories of everyday South Africans through small print runs. The publisher explained that a limited run of approximately 50 books was printed for the official launch, following which Siyabonga Mkhize suddenly and inexplicably decided that no further copies were to be printed. According to the publisher, the author cited vague contractual disagreements as grounds for the discontinuation of the printing (Head of Just Done Productions, personal communication, 2011 April 11). I conducted a variety of searches online to try and buy the book and although it was listed on a number of websites, it was always out of stock.<sup>10</sup> Despite the retraction of his book, Siyabonga Mkhize continued to have an online presence in the form of the now defunct Facebook group, the Uhlanga lwas'Embo Foundation, which sought to "collect, promote and preserve the cultural heritage of abaMbo". Interestingly, this Facebook group also championed the use of new technologies for cultural preservation: "We need to use modern technology in preserving our diverse cultural heritage for our future generations." (Uhlanga Lwasembo Foundation, n.d.)

The limited circulation of Siyabonga Mkhize's book points to his initial desire to enter into the record a specific version of the Mkhize past with the Embo-Nkasa line as the principal royal house, and his subsequent anxieties about having a fixed version of Mkhize history to which Victor Mkhize and others were opposed. It also speaks of power

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<sup>10</sup> I eventually found a copy at the University of Cape Town Library. The book is now only available for purchase directly from Siyabonga Mkhize.

struggles, both internally amongst the Mkhizes, and with likely implications for the position of the current premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Zweli Mkhize, and also in relation to external forces like the Zulu royal family. While Zweli Mkhize's involvement in Mkhize family affairs is understandable, in order to comprehend some of the complexities of his role in provincial politics, it is helpful to look at his activities in his public capacity as the premier of KwaZulu-Natal and how he negotiates his relationship with the Zulu king and the Zulu royal family.

### **The Premier's Projects**

At provincial level, significant funds have been reserved for various large scale heritage programmes run by the KwaZulu-Natal Office of the Premier in conjunction with different institutions like the University of KwaZulu-Natal's history departments in Durban and Pietermaritzburg and the provincial heritage conservation authority, *Amafa aKwaZulu-Natali*. The premier's Heritage Unit was started in 2007 and now consists of eight staff, managing different projects. Since Zweli Mkhize assumed office in 2009, he has introduced a genealogy project on clan histories, one to acknowledge "unsung struggle heroes" in the form of the KwaZulu-Natal Liberation Heritage Route and a project on the legacy of missionaries in KwaZulu-Natal (Brian Thusi, Office of the premier's Heritage Unit, personal communication, 2012 September 18). *Amafa's* council is appointed by the premier and is funded through a grant from his office. The organisation administers the permit process for demolition and alteration of protected structures in KwaZulu-Natal and also manages several major heritage projects such as the

Isandlwana Battlefield, Border Cave archaeological site and the KwaZulu Cultural Museum.

In Zweli Mkhize's 2011 "Budget Vote of the Office of the Premier", he explained that, working together, the Office of the Premier's Heritage Unit and *Amafa* aimed to "identify and profile previously marginalized heritage resources by highlighting, conserving, managing and promoting awareness of the cultural resources of the province" in a bid to transform the "heritage industry" in KwaZulu-Natal. It was envisaged that this would be achieved through various means, including the construction of monuments, the creation of heritage regulations and the promotion of certain heritage resources and sites as tourist attractions. Just under one eighth of the total budget of the Office of the Premier, R61, 826 million of a total R471, 105 million, was set aside for the promotion of heritage in the province. *Amafa aKwaZulu-Natali*, whose brief is "the identification, conservation, protection and administration of both tangible and living heritage resources of the province", has an allocation of R24, 057 million (Mkhize, 2011a: 9). These are significant amounts given the prevalence of pressing social issues such as crime, AIDS and poverty in the province but are in line with national aspirations for the development of the heritage industry and its potential for socio-economic development (Department of Arts and Culture, 2013).

Alongside the well-documented history of the Anglo-Zulu War and the history of the liberation struggle against apartheid, there is a commitment to a fuller understanding of the past. In his budget vote speech, the premier stated that his Heritage Unit would

conduct research on “the liberation heritage route and include the history of our pre-colonial and colonial eras, as well as the role and impact of the missionaries. Interesting research is being done on genealogy and encouraging recreation of family trees.” (Mkhize, 2011a: 9) The overarching theme of the liberation struggle is one that has dominated the South African heritage sector in recent years. These include projects like Freedom Park, which features a garden of remembrance and a memorial to honour a range of victims of human rights abuse, the Robben Island Museum, based in the former prison where anti-apartheid activists, most notably Nelson Mandela, were jailed, Constitution Hill, also a former prison that held conventional criminals and political detainees, including, at different times, Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi, and the Nelson Mandela Museum, named and themed after the ex-president, which is a multi-sited initiative at Umtata (the capital of the Transkei), Mvezo village (Mandela’s birthplace) and Qunu village (his childhood home) (Dubin, 2006).<sup>11</sup> These sites have all dealt with apartheid and the parts played by a variety of historical figures in fighting against the racially exclusive injustices of the apartheid state.

One of the premier’s projects, the KwaZulu-Natal Liberation Heritage Route continues in a similar vein but with a focus on local, previously unrecognised freedom fighters in KwaZulu-Natal. These include people like Anton Lembede, who lived and studied in Umbumbulu and was instrumental in creating the first ANC Youth League in 1944, and David Matiwane, a political activist who inspired a number of young people to get involved in the political struggle. Dr. May Mkhize Mashego, the province’s first lady, is

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<sup>11</sup> See Dubin (2006) for more on museological transformations, including the restructuring of the museum sector and Coombes (2003) on memory institutions in South Africa and visual mechanisms of memory-making such as monuments and modern art in the late 1990s.

the chairperson of the D.C.O. Matiwane Memorial Project, which has resulted in the conversion into a museum of Matiwane's home in Willowfontain, Pietermaritzburg (Naidoo, 2010). The larger KwaZulu-Natal route will see the creation of local structures such as the Heroes' Acre Monument, a memorial wall at the Slangspruit Cemetery that will bear the names of people who died during the political violence between the ANC and Inkatha that took place from the late 1980s to the early 1990s. The premier stated that the construction of the wall was part of the reconciliation process meant "to part ways with an era of violence" (Miya, 2010).

On the whole, the various heritage projects managed by the Office of the Premier focus on historical and cultural aspects of the province, linked to tourism and in some cases, underpinned by a desire for knowledge production. The genealogy and missionary legacy projects have been outsourced to the history departments at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in Durban and Pietermaritzburg but are still managed by the premier's Heritage Unit (Brian Thusi, personal communication, 2012 September 18). Dr. Vukile Khumalo of the UKZN Department of History in Durban has been tasked with conducting research on the impact of missionaries in KwaZulu-Natal, investigating six former mission stations to the south of Durban. Jabulani Sithole is the lead researcher and editor for the current phase of an historical research and publication project on clan genealogies. According to him, the premier wanted to initiate a project that would make a long-lasting contribution to the province, and leave a legacy of multidisciplinary knowledge production.

Jabulani Sithole's brief was to assemble a team of researchers from various disciplines to research and publish on the province's pre-colonial history, the first of three volumes spanning the pre-colonial era, and the periods from 1840 – 1910 and 1910 – 1994. He explained that work entails looking at the pre and very early colonial political makeup of contemporary KwaZulu-Natal and the multitude of other chiefdoms, identities, customs and traditions, including the Ndwandwe, Qwabe and Hlubi, which existed before the assimilating rise of the Zulu (Jabulani Sithole, interview, 2011 April 07). The project team includes Professor Xulu (an ethnomusicologist who now works for the Office of the Premier), Professor Mathenjwa (formerly of the Department of Zulu, University of Zululand), Professor Maphamala, of the Department of History at the University of Zululand, and the Chief Director of the Heritage Unit, Dr. Vusi Shongwe, who has conducted historical research on the Zulu king, Dingane. Jabulani Sithole explained that he saw the desired outputs of the premier's project as similar to those contained in *Mpumalanga: History and Heritage* (2007), a book edited by Peter Delius, Professor of History at the University of the Witwatersrand that focuses on the present-day Mpumalanga Province but takes a longer and more scholarly view of the region's past. Jabulani Sithole also suggested that similarities could be drawn with the Mbeki-era SADET (South Africa Democracy Education Trust) project, which was concerned with the paucity of historical materials related to the anti-apartheid struggle and produced histories in three volumes that covered the periods 1960 – 1990.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Five volumes of *The Road to Democracy in South Africa* have been published, three documenting the periods 1960 – 1990 and a further focussing on international solidarity and South Africans telling their stories, in the period 1950 – 70.

As a basis for his work for the premier, Jabulani Sithole drew heavily on research carried out by prominent revisionist Zulu historians, John Wright and Carolyn Hamilton, who have contributed greatly to discussions on the construction of identity and the formation of the Zulu state in the late pre-colonial and early colonial periods. In my discussion with him, Jabulani Sithole explained that in order to facilitate a more multi-faceted view of the pre-colonial and early colonial history of contemporary KwaZulu-Natal, the premier had called for more diverse perspectives. To get an insider's perspective on the histories of clans in KwaZulu-Natal, the premier felt that it was important to identify and engage people with an understanding of the local and internal dynamics of their areas, including local historians like Siyabonga Mkhize, who was selected as part of the research team (Jabulani Sithole, interview, 2011 April 07). Although the premier felt that it was necessary to allow local, non-professional historians to contribute to the programme, there were measures in place for professionally trained historians like Jabulani Sithole to critically engage with what was produced and to ensure its historical validity. Sithole felt that untrained writers like Siyabonga Mkhize needed nurturing and he would have preferred to use them as a reference group rather than as historians in their own rights (Jabulani Sithole, interview, 2011 April 07). The premier has allocated significant funds and resources to enter into the record a more comprehensive view of the KwaZulu-Natal region's past. His focus on pre-colonial clans and identities before the rise of the Zulu kingdom and the efforts around the past of the Mkhize and other clans are also indicative of wider political changes in KwaZulu-Natal and a shifting view of Zulu identity and the politics associated with it.

### **Negotiating Identity Politics**

Recognition of the status of traditional leadership forms part of a national agenda and is dealt with by the Commission on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims, established through the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act, 2003 (Act 41 of 2003). The current commission is the successor-in-law of the previous Nhlapo Commission, appointed by former President Thabo Mbeki to hear disputes over the legitimacy of traditional groupings and claims for traditional leadership. Although there were a number of applications in KwaZulu-Natal, the results were made public in July 2010 and the Zulu king was recognised as the only monarch in the province (BuaNews, 2010). The Nhlapo Commission received 705 countrywide applications, eleven of which came from KwaZulu-Natal. Some of the applicants from the province took advantage of the provisions of the new legislation to deny ever being subjects of the Zulu kings and promoted their own cultural practices and languages. The Hlubi and Nhlangwini, for example, declared that they were reviving their languages, *isiHlubi* and *isiNlangwini*. They argued that these were languages in their own right that had long been subsumed by standardised Zulu because missionaries had mistaken them for variants of that language. Other applicants stated that they simply wanted to rectify historical distortions that denied that their great grandparents were paramount chiefs (Sithole, 2008: xv). Again, the written record functioned as a strong basis for evidence for these claims. Mwelela Cele explained that numerous applicants came to the library to access books like *The James Stuart Archive* and A.T. Bryant's *Olden Times in Natal and Zululand*. Likewise, a representative from the Nhlapo Commission visited the library to do fact checking and verify the sources that applicants had submitted. Some applicants were also interested in



accessing old maps at the library to use as evidence for concurrent land claims (Mwelela Cele, interview, 2011 January 17).

It is unsurprising that applications to the Nhlapo Commission would include land claims, as authority over land is a key source of power for traditional leaders. While applications to the Commission were appeals by traditional leaders for government recognition of their status, with that status came the potential for material gains in the form of access to land and government resources. The Commission offered a channel through which traditional leaders in KwaZulu-Natal could make a claim on the past without directly undermining the status of the Zulu king and royal family, which is based, to a large extent, on the idea of a unified Zulu nation. For the years 2011 to 2012, traditional leaders earned a salary of approximately R170 000 a year compared to the Zulu king who earned significantly more at about R930 000 per annum (The Presidency, 2011). In addition, he receives a budget (R55, 028 million was allocated for 2011) to maintain his palaces and government grants to support the maintenance of various farms (Mkhize, 2011b: 7). Recently, traditional leader and ANC MP, Mandla Mandela, criticised the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs for being inconsistent in the support it provides to traditional leaders, particularly the amount of patronage given to the Zulu king, referring to the state's funding of the Ingonyama Trust Board, of which he is the sole trustee, and which benefits the Zulu monarchy financially. In addition, Mandela highlighted the budget of R3 million spent on exhuming the remains of Zwelithini's mother, Queen Thomozile, the king's seven state-maintained palaces and a huge security contingent to protect the Zulu king and his residences (Makinana, 2012).

The longstanding succession debate over the Mkhize chieftaincy reflects local struggles over the meaning of clan histories but is also indicative of a wider, changing political environment in which nationalistic impulses are evident and not restricted to the Mkhize grouping alone. Set within the context of the Nhlapo Commission, these impulses are linked to the potential for traditional leaders to gain access to land and state resources, which is dependent on the provision of documentary evidence to back up their claims and the government's recognition of their royal status. In order to better understand the efforts of these clans in KwaZulu-Natal and their desire to rectify what they see as historical distortions, it is useful to trace the origins of a traditional and homogenous Zulu identity and the way in which it has been manipulated for political ends at different times in the region's history.

#### *Established notions of Zuluness*

Questions of Zuluness and Zulu identity have generated considerable debate with significant academic output. Harries (1993: 107 – 110) has shown how pre-colonial Zuluness was based on a set of cultural markers defined by the Zulu royal family, which declined as a focus of identity and social cohesion following the downfall of the Zulu kingdom in 1879 and an increase in colonial administration. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, European linguists, folklorists and historians developed the idea of the 'Zulu' as a unified, homogenous 'volk' or nation, separate from the Xhosa, and living on both sides of the Thukela River. Drawing on the work of Carolyn Hamilton, Kloppe (1996: 55) argues that in its sixty-year existence the Zulu Kingdom never extended further south than approximately 100km to the north of Durban and in many instances the

Zulus' southern neighbours spoke dialects distinct from the language in the kingdom and followed practices that differed in important respects from those entrenched by Shaka in the north. As evidence of the heterogeneity within the supposedly united Zulu kingdom, Hamilton and Wright (1990) argue that amaLala was a social and political category to collectively and disparagingly describe the chiefdoms in the south-eastern regions of what is today KwaZulu-Natal. These chiefdoms were required to maintain identities clearly separate from those of the Zulu royal house in the north, were treated as subordinates and were not involved in any of the central decision-making processes.

Despite the heterogeneity of different groupings in this region, a traditional and homogenous notion of Zuluness has been used at various times throughout the twentieth century by Zulu royalists, white segregationists, the early twentieth-century black petite bourgeoisie, the apartheid government, KwaZulu bantustan authorities and Inkatha, for political ends to unite and constrain various constituencies under the generic title 'Zulu'. Harries (1993: 110 – 112) writes that in the early twentieth century, Zulu kings, who had been incorporated into the South African system of indirect rule, the royal house and certain chiefs looked to an historic Zulu identity to support their status and power. Members of the black petite bourgeoisie also sought to attract a mass following in attempts to defend their rights to vote and buy land, particularly in the face of the 1910 Union of South Africa.<sup>13</sup> Through cultural organisations like Inkatha kaZulu (the Zulu National Congress), formed in 1924, it encouraged the idea of a shared past and

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<sup>13</sup> The 1910 Union of South Africa was the predecessor to the present-day Republic of South Africa. It united the then separate colonies of the Cape, Natal, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State and was based on the subordination of the majority black population's interests in favour of those of the governing settler population.

represented the Zulu king and language as traditional symbols that bound Zulu-speakers in a new and expanded political state. As a result, it was able to unite disparate rural communities, uprooted and unsettled by colonialism, into a powerful ethnic alliance that found a sense of security in the new, traditional 'Zulu' identity. In the 1930s and 1940s, historical research conducted in newly established state ethnology and anthropology departments contributed to the demarcation of 'Zulu' and other 'tribes' and strengthened a tribalised understanding of population categorisation that underpinned the future apartheid administration.

Mangosuthu Buthelezi founded the second incarnation of Inkatha in 1975. A substantial amount of research has emphasised Inkatha's promotion of a homogenous and traditionalistic notion of Zuluness and how it served the movement's political aims. This includes studies of Inkatha's political manoeuvring and economic strategies in the 1970s and 1980s (Maré and Hamilton, 1987). Other studies concentrated more on specific aspects of Buthelezi's manipulation of the past. For example, Golan (1991) has written about the continued reference to the past in his political speeches, as well as the compulsory Inkatha-biased textbook, *Ubuntu Botho*, which he introduced to KwaZulu schools and which, she maintains, gave an ideologically slanted version of Zulu history. She concludes that numerous parallels were drawn between the past and present to establish continuity from the Zulu king, Shaka's reign of the independent Zulu kingdom to the similar role performed by Inkatha in the bantustan of KwaZulu. Klopper (1996) discusses the use of traditional Zulu dress as an important cultural symbol in the political arena, noting the ways in which Buthelezi used this imagery to legitimate his rule by

making tangible and visible, a continuity of leadership that connected him to the leaders of the Zulu Kingdom. In each case, this type of research served to expose and unpick a traditionalistic and generic notion of Zulu identity that Buthelezi utilised for political ends.

Inkatha's politicised notion of Zuluness contributed significantly to widespread violence in KwaZulu in the 1980s, mainly between supporters of the Zulu-centric Inkatha and members of the ANC. Umbumbulu was no exception and in the mid-1980s it was wracked by local conflicts (with varying and complicated allegiances but predominantly between what were seen as Mkhize and Makhanya groupings), which subsequently mutated into broader violence at political party level. In her doctoral dissertation, Sarah Mathis (2008) focuses on the conflicts between the Makhanya and Mkhize in Umbumbulu in the mid-1980s. She argues that while land played a significant part in previous conflicts in the area, for example, during the 1920s between the Mkhize and Makhanya over their common boundary, it was not a great source of contestation during the 1980s. She maintains that the Mkhize succession dispute (discussed above), was "the only example of a dispute within a chiefdom where land played a major role" and the centrality of land was based on the need to establish a boundary between the supporters of Nkasa and Thimuni (91).

Rather, Mathis argues against traditional explanations for conflict such as competition over land and cycles of revenge, as they do not fully explain the complexities of the violent conflict in Umbumbulu during the mid-1980s and early 1990s. While kinship ties

and social relations offer some insight into the more localised conflicts, local explanations for the sources of conflicts between the Mkhize and Makhanya were “remarkably varied and rather vague”, although several of her respondents cited land as a central and contentious issue (85). Mathis writes that the Mkhize and Makhanya chiefdoms saw themselves as semi-independent political units that were threatened by invasions into their territory. When conflicting groupings began to cross the boundary between the chiefdoms and launch attacks across that boundary, the smaller clashes quickly developed into a much larger-scale conflict between the chiefdoms. These subsequently escalated to political party level as, Mathis maintains, powerful militant leaders were likely given leeway in establishing themselves because different political entities, like Inkatha, the apartheid state and the ANC “were hoping to recruit them to fight in the larger struggle for control of the province.” (114) While competition over land may not have been the source of the conflict between the Makhanya and Mkhize chiefdoms in the mid-1980s, it is likely that the symbolic value of land, and the chiefly authority associated with it, played a considerable role. As discussed in the previous chapter, chiefs have historically functioned as administrators of land and authority over it was, and continues to be, a key source of their power. During the Embo-Makhanya conflict, incursions into the respective chiefs’ land by neighbouring clans would have been seen as attempts to undermine this status, and the chief’s authority over his land and people.

### *Post-apartheid Zuluness*

The power of Inkatha (and post-apartheid as the Inkatha Freedom Party) has subsequently waned and contemporary research into Zuluness continues to unpick the homogeneity of a politicised Zulu identity. However, in the public sphere the Zulu king is still commonly seen by, and referred to as, a symbol of Zuluness and a custodian of Zulu tradition and custom (Buthelezi, 2012: 50). A clear example of this is the KwaZulu-Natal premier's 2011 "State of the Province" speech in which he stated: "For 40 years now Isilo [a name for the Zulu King] has given us leadership, support and guidance as a symbol of our unity, a custodian of our culture and an important pillar in the building of our nation" (Mkhize, 2011c: 1).

However, emergent cultural movements suggest otherwise and point to a growing opposition to the idea of a unified Zulu nation and calls for recognition of pre-Zulu groupings and identities, which Zweli Mkhize himself has acknowledged and supported. Mbongiseni Buthelezi's doctoral research, *Sifuna umlando wethu (We are Looking for our History): Oral Literature and the Meanings of the Past in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, focuses on the oral artistic forms of the Ndwandwe, members of one of the most important kingdoms in south-east Africa at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The *Ubumbano lwamaZwide* (Unity Association of the Zwide People) has been reviving and popularising the memory of the violent incorporation of the Ndwandwe into the Zulu kingdom in the 1820s, in part through adapting the meanings of Ndwandwe symbols such as the *izithakazelo* (kinship group praises), *izibongo* (personal praises) of the founding figures of the Ndwandwe kingdom and the Ndwandwe *ihubo* (kinship group 'anthem').

Members of the Qwabe have also joined forces to create the *Ubumbano LwamaQwabe*, a non-profit organisation focused on exploring the origins of the Qwabe kinship grouping and Qwabe himself. The aims of the organisation include “uniting the Qwabe people as a ‘nation’ and (re)discovering its correct history, rekindling the dignity of the Qwabe and uniting the amaQwabe in celebration of their ceremonies and their identity.” The *Ubumbano lwamaQwabe* is made up of two segments, a think tank and a task team. According to the findings of the task team, the history of Qwabe can be traced back beyond “Zulu identity [which] began in the 1800s during King Shaka’s reign. That means that Zulu identity is not (authentically) the entire Nguni nation’s. It was enforced on groups that were defeated by Shaka’s regime. The Qwabe are therefore Nguni not Zulu.” (Hlatshwayo, 2011) The proliferation of clan websites also points to the claims being made in the public realm for pre-Zulu identities, customs and traditions. Southern groupings like the Bhaca, Cele and Nhlanguwini all promote the origin of their clan and its history on their websites.<sup>14</sup> In discussions with Mwelela Cele (interview, 2011 January 17) and Jabulani Sithole (interview, 2011 April 07), they explained to me that there were similar groupings such as the Ndimas, Mchunus, Macingwanas and Thembus, who were intimating that they too, wanted recognition of their pre-Zulu traditions, customs and identities.

In 2007, the leaders of a number of clans made applications to the Nhlapo Commission for recognition of their royal status. King Goodwill Zwelithini and the IFP president, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, replied by rallying support from the IFP-dominated Provincial House of Traditional Leaders, condemning the applications as an affront to the “Zulu

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<sup>14</sup> See for example, [www.bhaca.co.za](http://www.bhaca.co.za) and [www.cele.co.za](http://www.cele.co.za).



nation". Statements issued by Zweli Mkhize and Jacob Zuma, then the ANC's deputy provincial chairperson and deputy president respectively, reiterated their support and recognition of the Zulu king as the province's sole monarch. In the face of such stiff opposition, six of the eleven original applicants withdrew their applications and four of the remaining five asked the Nhlapo Commission for personal protection as they had received death threats. About a month after this, Professor Nhlapo and two of his senior commissioners resigned, citing work pressures (Sithole, 2008: xvi).

In Ixopo, in southern KwaZulu-Natal, Melizwe Dlamini has called for the recognition of the Nhlanguwini as a pre-Zulu kingdom in its own right, and contested the results of the Nhlapo Commission, which acknowledged the Zulu king as the sole monarch in the province. His claim is not unfounded as, according to Mwelela Cele, his grandmother was the daughter of Dinizulu, who was the Zulu king from 1884 to 1913, and the sister of Princess Magogo (Mangosuthu Buthelezi's mother) and King Solomon, the Zulu king from 1913 to 1933. Melizwe Dlamini's father was also the full cousin of Mangosuthu Buthelezi and the Minister of Forestry in the KwaZulu government (Mwelela Cele, interview, 2011 January 17). Jabulani Sithole further suggested that the Zulu royal family acknowledged the royal status of the Nhlanguwini because they allowed one of their daughters to marry into that family (Jabulani Sithole, interview, 2011 April 07). The Nhlanguwini website, entitled "Nhlanguwini Kingdom", makes the following bold statement:

His Majesty Melizwe Dlamini III therefore awaits the recognition of his kingship as king or *ingonyama* of the Dlamini nation in South Africa by the commission, but this is only a confirmation of the commission which must be done in terms of the legislation, Act 41 of 2003 which sets the provisions for kingships, queenships in

accordance with the South African legislative standards... His Majesty Melizwe Dlamini III is the culturally appointed Ingonyama (King) of the Dlamini Nation, awaiting the implementation of the second phase of commission findings by the Presidency (Private Office of His Majesty Dlamini III, 2010).

The Ntshongweni therefore promote Melizwe Dlamini as their culturally appointed king but await the second phase of the Commission on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims to be officially recognised. However, identity politics in contemporary KwaZulu-Natal is a fraught affair and direct challenges to established notions of Zuluness, and therefore to the Zulu king and royal family as custodians of Zulu tradition and custom, are not without consequence. The ongoing contestation around Melizwe Dlamini's claims has stimulated significant debate on Zulu-language radio stations like *Igagasi* and *Ukhozi* FM, a vociferous backlash against him in the province's main Zulu language paper, *Isolezwe*, as well as attacks on him (Mwelela Cele, personal communication, 2011 April 06). A Zulu language article detailing the attack on Dlamini includes a headline that, in English, reads: "Dlamini fears for his life" (Sikhakhane, 2011)

## **Conclusion**

Contemporary practices involved in the management of the past in Umbumbulu reveal dynamic and energetic efforts around the history of the Mkhize, including the activities of clan historian, Siyabonga Mkhize, and the various projects run by the Heritage Unit of the Office of the Premier. These activities involve a broad spectrum of actors including members of government like Victor Mkhize and the premier, professional historians like Jabulani Sithole and Vukile Khumalo, as well as local producers of history like Siyabonga Mkhize. These actors work across a broad range of media and modes, including oral forms of history, written texts, websites and social media networks on the

Internet. They also draw on a variety of sources to validate their claims – praise poetry, the knowledge of relatives and friends, archival materials and records like those found at the Killie Campbell Library. The complexity and messiness of these activities and the interactions between the different actors do not easily fit into simple, rigid categories. Siyabonga Mkhize, for example, is at once a Christian church leader and a traditionalist, he utilises both oral (in his role as an *imbongi*) and written (in his role as author of a book) forms of history and his practices trouble a clear distinction between the two, as well as between custodianship and the production of a version of history.

Siyabonga Mkhize's activities expose intra-Mkhize disputation and a major struggle between the Zulu royal house, which seeks to maintain its historic monopoly and custodianship of generic Zulu traditions and customs, and emergent cultural movements, calling for the recognition of pre-Zulu customs, traditions and identities. His claim for recognition of a certain lineage and a particular, pre-Zulu Mkhize clan history, poses a risk not only to other branches of the Mkhize but in conjunction with those of other clans like the Ndwandwe, Qwabe and Nhlanguwini, a direct threat to the authenticity and power of the Zulu king as a custodian and symbol of a unified Zulu nation. Along with the premier's programmes, the activities of these emerging cultural movements point to widespread and growing opposition to a broad and encompassing idea of Zuluness, a recasting of information on Zulu history and a desire to establish a more nuanced view of the past to include the histories of those subsumed under the generic category, 'Zulu'. The intersection of the realm of tradition and custom with formalised systems of record keeping has resulted in initiatives like the Nhlapo Commission, which offer official

acknowledgement of claims to traditional leadership and royalty. The activities of these movements indicate a keen awareness of the power of the official documentary record and a strong desire to enter their claims and histories into that record. At stake in making these claims is the recognition of a particular status – the public recognition of one's history and the chiefly or royal status that brings with it the potential to gain access to land and state resources.

### ***Chapter Five – “We are a family of history here...”***

The issues at stake around the preservation and production of the past are not confined to tradition and custom, as we have encountered in the previous two chapters. While clan politics and the issues surrounding traditional leadership offer insight into a particular view of the past, in the Makhanya area of Umbumbulu, Desmond Makhanya has produced a different type of history. In discussion with me, he explained that the history of the Makhanyas in Umbumbulu, and in particular, that of his immediate and extended family (the descendants of Makhubalo, his great grandfather, and Nembula, Makhubalo's half brother) is very much intertwined with the colonial history of the area – the arrival of American missionaries, the founding of the Adams Mission and the establishment of the Amanzimtoti Theological School, which later became Adams College (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2010 July 05). Desmond Makhanya has written about various aspects of the college's history in an unpublished manuscript and has also published shortened versions on the college website.

Rev. Dr. Newton John Adams, after whom the mission and subsequent college were named, formed part of a group of missionaries, who, in 1835, under the auspices of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, arrived in South Africa with the aim of bringing “to the native people of South Africa knowledge and the Christian religion.” Also in this group were Rev. Grout, who settled in what is today known as Groutville and Rev. Lindley at the missions Inanda and later Imfume. In 1847, Dr. Adams, who was initially stationed at Umlazi, moved to Amanzimtoti, about 22 miles south of Durban and established the new Adams Mission (Adams College, n.d.a). Adams

College was founded in 1853 (two years after Dr. Adams's death) with four schools, comprising a Teacher Training School, High School, Industrial School and Theological School (Makhanya, n.d.: 1).

Desmond Makhanya began writing his history of Adams College in 1998, using reference materials from the Killie Campbell Library to substantiate his own experiences and oral histories he had collected over the years. The as yet unpublished manuscript consists of 56 A4 pages, although some sections (seven pages in total) are duplicated, and is divided into the categories of music, health, theology, education, agriculture and sport. Due to his failing eyesight, Desmond Makhanya explained that an assistant called Nonhlanhla, who he considered to be a proficient English speaker, aided him in transcribing parts of the manuscript and a Professor Wallis, a former Executive Dean at the Durban University of Technology, helped him to categorise and structure the manuscript into a more coherent state. He made clear that even with their help, the story was his own as he felt he was the only one who could tell it (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2011 April 01). The manuscript sketches a history of Adams Mission and the later Adams College, its cultural and sporting activities, its former principals and its well-known alumni, from the time of the arrival of missionaries in 1835 to about 2003. It is peppered with Desmond Makhanya's personal anecdotes, memories and details of past events such as strikes, the Umbumbulu Annual Agricultural Show and Shaka Day celebrations. Unsurprisingly, given the close connection between the missionaries, Adams College and the Makhanyas in Umbumbulu, the manuscript features considerable reference to Desmond Makhanya's immediate and extended family.

## **Desmond Makhanya**

In order to better appreciate the motivation behind the production of his manuscript, it is necessary to first understand Desmond Makhanya's background, and how he came to be interested in the intertwined histories of his family and the missionaries who founded the Adams Mission and College. His life story and experiences in particular, but also those of his forebears, form a large part of the substance of the manuscript and are therefore integral in understanding the processes, contexts and conditions that led to its production and under which it was produced. Therefore, in what follows, I offer Desmond Makhanya's account of his life history as told to me during a number of encounters with him. From the outset, there are various limiting factors that determine the extent to which I could access the story of his life and his experiences. Firstly, his life narrative is based on his memories and recounted to me as only a sliver of the reality of his actual experiences. In a sense, Desmond Makhanya is archiving the story of his life, selecting certain aspects of it and rejecting others, compressing it into moments and events that are important to him, or alternatively, that he feels are interesting to me or significant to my research. His narrative as told to me was not a neutral endeavour but rather a performance of his life story, stimulated by the engagement between him as a storyteller and me as a researcher. The type and level of detail of information that Desmond Makhanya offered to me was therefore purposefully orchestrated to convey a particular sense of his life, and that of his ancestors, and begs the question, what was he telling me and for what purpose? Secondly, much of what Desmond Makhanya told me relates inadvertently to the story of his life. Due to his apparent wealth of historical knowledge of Adams College and Umbumbulu, he offered significant, yet non-consecutive, detail of various aspects of life

related to the mission and college, which in turn correspond to events and experiences in his life and those of his ancestors. Therefore, at times it was difficult to discern where the line between the history of the mission and college, and his own life, was drawn. This becomes more evident later in the chapter when I examine more closely his manuscript, which reveals the proximity of Desmond Makhanya's biography to that of Adams College.

In the following section, I present a self-reflexive ethnography of my interactions with Desmond Makhanya and how I came to know him and his life story. In doing this, I am interested in the performance of his life story, how this relates to what he has recorded in his manuscript, as well as his activities in placing that history on record. I first came to know of Desmond Makhanya through Mwelela Cele who attended high school at Adams College in Umbumbulu with Desmond Makhanya's son, Thulasizwe. Mwelela Cele suggested I speak to both him and his father who were closely affiliated with the college and had a good knowledge of the history of the area. On a warm and hazy autumn morning, I drove into Durban's city centre to meet with Thulasizwe Makhanya and to begin my interactions with the Makhanya family of Umbumbulu. The meeting was not particularly productive. In addition to some part-time work with Adams College, Thulasizwe Makhanya is the manager of Cool Runnings, a Jamaican-styled bar in Milne Street near the Durban beach front. It was mid-morning and the bar smelt of stale alcohol and old cigarette smoke. Amidst reverberating reggae music and interruptions as staff members asked him questions, I learnt from him that it was in fact his father, Desmond



Makhanya, who had a vested interest in, and knowledge of, the history of Umbumbulu, and that it was him I should visit to find out what I wanted to know.

I have made numerous trips to Umbumbulu during my fieldwork but as Adams College is on the outskirts of Umbumbulu town, my first trip to Desmond Makhanya's house required some extra navigation. I took the normal route along the south coast freeway, past the old airport, oil refineries and the industrial area of Isipingo, until I arrived at the Amanzimtoti turnoff. As I took the turnoff over the freeway, I was reminded of the recent additions to the area's landscape, two uninspired shopping malls with faux European names like "La Galeria". They are uncomfortably nestled in the remaining coastal forest and seem at odds with Umbumbulu, a mere 20km inland, which, aside from the magistrate's court and a handful of shops in the town, remains semi-rural and consists mainly of sparsely populated, rolling hills. When I first contacted Desmond Makhanya, it was with the trepidation to be expected of a fledgling researcher entering a new area but I have since looked forward to my visits with him. He was generally the first person I would contact when I arrived in Durban for fieldwork trips. He was always enthusiastic, and before I suggested a meeting, he would ask: "Are you coming up to see us?" as though we were old friends. When I arrived at his house, he would tell his wife things like: "He is a good man!" in reference to my research and interest in the history of Adams College. I imagine that as an outsider with connections to a university, I was also seen as someone who might have helped him to publish his manuscript. I make this assumption as he had tried to get his work published with the help of Dr. Vukile Khumalo from the Department of History at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

On my first trip to see Desmond Makhanya, I got horribly lost. For the most part, Umbumbulu consists of undulating hills and winding roads, all of which, to the uninitiated, seem very alike. After a few phone calls, and travelling back from the far side of Umbumbulu, I saw what I thought was Adams College. The names “Josephine Makhanya” and “Sibusisiwe Makhanya” displayed on Clover and Coca-Cola signs outside senior primary schools confirmed that I was, indeed, in ‘Makhanyaland’. Desmond Makhanya is well known in his area and after a couple of brief roadside conversations with some locals, I was directed to his house and made my way steadily up his unpaved driveway. The house was large for the area but not lavish. The décor was simple; the walls adorned with few decorations except for a black and white photograph of an old woman in a dress, who I later learnt was one of Desmond Makhanya’s ancestors, Charlotte Maxeke. This was in stark contrast to the lounge of the Mkhize Inkosi, Kusakusa, which featured numerous framed pictures of the KwaZulu-Natal Premier, the Zulu king, Zwelithini, as well as images of the chief and his lineage, predominantly in traditional garb. As I sat with Desmond Makhanya, his daughter brought us some glasses, scones and a bottle of Coke whilst his young granddaughter, who also lives in the house, danced in front of the television to a Hannah Montana show. The most noticeable part of the living room was the large cabinet, which was literally heaving with soccer, netball but mainly tennis, trophies. This, I later learnt, was testament to his family’s sporting prowess and linked to Desmond Makhanya’s involvement as a tennis coach at Adams College.

Desmond Makhanya and I began talking and it immediately became apparent that for

him, the past was very much part of the present. He has an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of Adams College, its former principals and prominent alumni, and gave me details of their lives, achievements and influence in Umbumbulu and beyond. While I was interested in the history of the mission, college and surrounding area, I was mainly concerned with Desmond Makhanya and with his sense of the past. After learning a considerable amount about former principals and rectors, I was able to steer the conversation back to his life and the manuscript he has produced. Desmond Makhanya was born near Adam's Mission in what is now the Makhanya Sobonakhona Traditional Authority Area on the 14 September 1935. At age seven he began school at the infants section of Adams College and remained at the college until he matriculated in 1954. After school, he worked at McCord's Hospital for three years and then attended Fort Cox Agricultural College in the Eastern Cape from 1958 – 1960, following which he spent a year tending to his father's sugarcane crops and looking after his poultry. From 1961 – 1989, the last 28 years of his working life, he performed various roles but ultimately as a supervisor at the SAPPI SAICCOR Mill in Umkomaas. He retired due to his poor eyesight. One of his colleagues was the Mkhize *Inkosi*, Kusakusa, who worked at the mill as a Senior Operator of Purifying Water. Desmond Makhanya has had an ongoing affiliation with Adam's College and four generations of his family have attended the school. Since 1999, he has been part of the college governing body and since 2006, served as the self-appointed college historian due to his knowledge of the college history. His son, Thulasizwe, is the current fundraiser for the school (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2010 July 05).

Desmond Makhanya explained that through his personal experiences and the histories told to him by his grandmother and mother (who also attended Adam's College in the early 1900s), he developed an in-depth knowledge of the history of the college and the people involved with it, which others encouraged him to write down. He expressed a desire for the history of Adams College to be known, to "be seen" as he put it, and felt that he was best placed to tell its story. In reference to his manuscript, he stated:

I want that thing to be published because I gave it to another chap [Dr. Vukile Khumalo, an historian at the University of KwaZulu-Natal] but he has taken along time. He wanted pictures but I don't see how the first edition... It could be without pictures, just to get the history seen. What I have written about Adams, I have written everything small [a detailed history]. The first principals, who were church ministers, Rev. Rood, Ireland, Goodenough, Coles, then Albert Leroy who was there when my mother was at the college around 1901 – 1926... (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2010 July 05)

The unpublished manuscript is an interesting document. In its short 56 pages, it covers a surprisingly long period of history, as well as personal experiences and perspectives. It does not offer an historical narrative of Adams College nor is it chronological. Rather, it is semi-autobiographical and based on different themes. It piqued my interest and I wondered what it was trying to convey? It was apparent that Desmond Makhanya had decided to record some aspects of the college's history but not others. In the following sections, I am concerned with understanding why he made the decisions he did and how these are reflected in his manuscript. What did Desmond Makhanya hope to achieve with its publication and wider circulation? What was his strategy in recording what he did and how did he do it?

### **Desmond Makhanya's manuscript – "The History of Adams Mission / Adams College"**

In what follows, I undertake a close reading of the writing of Desmond Makhanya's manuscript, entitled *The History of Adams Mission / Adams College*. I do this to try and determine how he thinks about historical materials and history, and why they are relevant to him. It is part of a conscious effort on my part to try and understand the motivation behind the production of Desmond Makhanya's manuscript. I do this by trying to understand the position he assumes, his writerly perspective, and through analysing the choices he makes, the forms, language and categories he uses. As an intervention into understanding Desmond Makhanya's text, my analysis requires that I take a stance, offer my perspective on, and interpretation of, the manuscript. However, I include numerous excerpts from the manuscript to afford the reader a sense of the original text alongside my interpretation of it. I present this text as it was initially written, including errata.

As a hypothesis, it is my contention that in producing the history of Adams Mission and College, Desmond Makhanya is not only writing the history of these institutions but also the story of his immediate and extended family, and their early and later interactions with the missionaries. Most importantly, he is recording the contributions that the missionaries, his family, notable college alumni and members of staff, have made to the development of Unbumbulu and South Africa more widely. Desmond Makhanya's own biography is also inserted in this history and a considerable part of his manuscript comprises his own accounts of experiences at Adams College. In order to substantiate this assertion, in the next section, I aim to show that Desmond Makhanya's manuscript is

in fact the intertwined histories of interactions between the missionaries who arrived in Umbumbulu, his family and his own life story. I argue that Desmond Makhanya's production uses the language of modernism, one that recognises as positive the 'civilising mission' associated with missionaries and colonists – the idea that missionary, or more broadly colonial, ideas and ways of doing things were agencies of 'modernisation' that contributed constructively to various aspects of life including education, health, sport, agriculture and religion. These ideas and ways of doing things subsequently generated modern alumni, staff and those associated with the college (including Desmond Makhanya's family) who perpetuated these ideals and went on to make valuable contributions to, and excel in, areas such as sport, education, health and politics.

This assumption is evidenced at a superficial yet significant level in the categories into which Desmond Makhanya (and Professor Wallis) have divided the history of the mission and college. These include "Agriculture", "General Education in Adams Mission", "Health Services in Adams Mission / College", "The History of Sports in Adams Mission", "Music", "Industrial School" and "Businesses in Adams Mission". In my analysis of Desmond Makhanya's text, I use the content contained within the various categories to explore the history he has produced in relation to the institutional history of Adams Mission and College, his own life history, experiences and memoirs, as well as the story of his immediate and extended family, their interactions with missionaries in Umbumbulu, and importantly, their achievements, influence and contributions to Umbumbulu and South Africa at large. In doing this, I aim to assess my own hypothesis that the motivation behind Desmond Makhanya's producing his manuscript is to make

more widely known the story of his family and his own life history, situated within the broader institutional history of Adams Mission and College, which in turn is linked to an overarching *kholwa* heritage. I then go on to explore what is at stake in making this history more broadly known.

### *The “main history”*

In discussion with me, Desmond Makhanya made clear that the history he has written is very much a *kholwa* story (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2011 August 03). The term *ikhholwa* (*pl. amakhholwa*, lit. believer/s) is commonly associated with the mission-educated elite, many of whom were educated at Adams Mission, who emerged as leaders in the 1920s and 30s and contributed to the formation of organisations like the Inkatha kaZulu, the Zulu National Congress, and the African National Congress. However, this category is worthy of critical investigation and, as we will see later in the chapter, developed as the result of political maneuvering between a complex mix of traditionalists, white segregationists and the burgeoning black South African bourgeoisie in the region that is now KwaZulu-Natal. Desmond Makhanya’s manuscript begins with a broad overview of the history of Adams Mission and the later college, from its inception to the beginning of the apartheid era (1948) when it became the Amanzimtoti Training College, until the post-apartheid era when it was re-established as Adams College. This first section, what Desmond Makhanya refers to in the text as the “main history”, makes up roughly one quarter of the entire manuscript and offers a condensed history of the arrival of missionaries in the area, the establishment of Adams Mission and College, and its 150 year history until its sesquicentennial anniversary in 2003. It is

written, as is much of the manuscript, with significant mention of past principals (some of whom were missionaries) and Desmond Makhanya's ancestors, and their influence on, and contributions to, the development of the areas surrounding the Adams Mission and College, and beyond.

On the opening page, we are introduced to the first of Desmond Makhanya's ancestors, Mbalasi Makhanya, the mission's first Christian convert, whose fateful encounter with Dr. Adams supposedly prolonged his missionary work in the area and resulted in the healing of her sick son, Nembula (half brother to Makhubalo, Desmond Makhanya's great grandfather):

When Rev. Dr. Adams had preached for over 10 years without getting any convert, he had given up hope of ever getting one, he than [sic] packed his belongings ready to leave. The morning on the day when he was to leave with the family, there came Mbalasi Makhanya with a small boy for a medical treatment. When they talked he discovered that Mbalasi was ready to accept Jesus Christ, thus she became the first convert. This happening was the start of great things as he unpacked all his belongings to stay to start the missionary work yet again (Makhanya, n.d.: 1).

Much of the remainder of this section describes developments at the college. Details are given about the growth of the college, both physically, in terms of the construction of new buildings, classrooms, and sporting facilities, as well as well the introduction of new courses, levels of study, subjects and new sports. Where the focus is not on Desmond Makhanya's family, for the most part, the manuscript's narrative is written with continual reference to the activities of principals, prominent staff members and well-known alumni. It provides information about their contributions to the development of the college in



terms of education and sport, and to Umbumbulu and South Africa more widely, as illustrated in the examples below:

Thereafter we had five Principals who also had a role in the development of the Institution who were then followed by Mr. Bates from 1892 –1898, Rev. G. Cowles from 1899 – 1900, Rev. Albert Le Roy from 1901 – 1926 who was Principal during the transformation of Education... It was also the time when sports were developed into some kind of recreation and competition.

In the early 20's Adams College was joined by *Inkosi* Albert Luthuli as a Staff Member who later became the *Inkosi* in Groutville, the Administrator of Kwazulu-Natal Sugarcane Growers and the President of the ANC... and it was the time when the High School also was headed by Prof. Z.K. Mathews [sic]<sup>1</sup> being the first black Head Master, followed [sic] by Mr. K. R. Brukneur [sic - Brueckner] the Vice Principal and Mr. Otta Githens [sic - Grithens], the principal (Makhanya, n.d.: 2 – 4).

In his manuscript, Desmond Makhanya paints a glowing picture of Adams College as a sought after centre of education, music, sports and agriculture: “One of the formidable institutions in Southern Africa and beyond the Borders [sic]” (31). This becomes more evident as I address each category in detail in the relevant sections below. As Mwelela Cele pointed out in an interview with me, schools like Adams College and Inanda Seminary were, and continue to be, recognised as premier black educational institutions. He referred to Adams College as “the Eton of black South Africa” (Mwelela Cele, interview, 2011 November 24). The status and allure of the college is clear in Desmond Makhanya’s reference, in the early pages of the manuscript, to celebrated local and international alumni, many of whom were members of prestigious royal families and travelled great distances to be able to attend the college:

It was during this time that the College was a haven for students coming from the Royal Families, Zulu, Sotho, Pedi, Tswana, the Moeshesh clan in Lesotho, the

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<sup>1</sup> In 1925, ZK Mathews, a prominent black academic in South Africa, was appointed head of the high school at Adams College.

Dikgale Family from the Bapedi, that is why Sir Seretse Kama came from the Royal Family in Botswana got his education here. Abantwana [princes] from the Zulu Royal Family i.e. Mntwana Thandayiphi Zulu, Mntwana Penuel Zulu, Mntwana Senzokazulu Zulu and their cousin Mntwana Mangosuthu Buthelezi...the College had students that came from East Africa i.e. Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe were known as Northern and Southern Rhodesia respectively. Malawians were known as Nyasaland and Tanzania known as Tanganyika (4 – 5).

### *Family Histories*

Members of Desmond Makhanya's family are allocated a significant portion of the introductory section (almost one tenth) of the "main history" of the college. The account is dominated by the Makhubalo and Nembula lines of the Makhanya while "the other Duze sons" (other Makhanya lines) are only given very cursory mention in one sentence. However, this seems logical, given that the Makhubalo and Nembula families had the most interaction with the missionaries and the greatest association with Adams College. It is important to note the how Desmond Makhanya records the ongoing work of these *kholwa* lineages in terms of the spread of religion, health and education, the perpetuation of work stimulated by the missionaries. In the manuscript, he writes about the first convert, Mbalasi who:

adopted the name of Nembula, had a son, Nembula, who had two sons, Ira Newton and Mavuma John. On the Mbalasi side Ira became the first ordained Minister of Religion and Mavuma John Nembula who went to America to translate the first Zulu Bible. After the Bible project, he then did Medicine in Michigan School of Medicine in a record time of five years... Rev. Ira Newton Nembula established a Mission station near Creighton called Newton Ville (Makhanya, n.d.: 1 – 2).

He also gives details of how "on the Makhubalo side" (his direct lineage) there were numerous 'scholars' and teachers, who "played a vital role in the promotion of education, building of the satellite schools and churches." These include Rev. William Makhanya, a

church minister who established the American Board Mission Church in Beatrice Street in Durban. The last-born child, Jaja Makhanya, established a church and a satellite school known as “Jaja Memorial Church and School” (1 – 2). It is worth noting the amount of space allocated to Desmond Makhanya’s own family history in the “main history” of the college. This serves to strengthen my hypothesis that he is indeed writing his family history whilst producing a history of Adams College as an institution.

### *Agriculture*

Following the introductory main history of the manuscript is a section entitled “Agriculture”, which again, is situated within a modernist paradigm and associated with development. In what follows, I also discuss what I consider to be the subsections of the agricultural section, namely “Toti Farm” and “The Survey of Adams Mission”. The section on agriculture and subsections repeat the narrative style that is found throughout Desmond Makhanya’s manuscript, telling the story of Adams College with reference to the apparently modernising influence of the missionaries, the contributions of his immediate and extended family and to a lesser degree, the insertion of his own memoirs and experiences. According to Eva Jackson (2010: 8), the sugar milling enterprise based at Adams mission station and run by Desmond Makhanya’s ancestor, Ira Adams Nembula, “was the first black-owned mill in the country.” In the section on agriculture, Desmond Makhanya writes that Illovo Sugar later acquired this mill but that smaller sugarcane growers in and near Adams continued to supply the larger consortium. During a slump in the early 1950s, he claims that another of his relations, Kate Makhanya, was instrumental in sustaining the processing of sugarcane through an appeal to the then

apartheid government. Desmond Makhanya gives details of how she wrote a letter to the then Minister of Natives Affairs, Dr. H.F. Verwoerd, “in the medium of Afrikaans and got a favourable reply of negotiating with the Illovo Sugar Mill for assistance in funding the planting of the initial field and repaying the debt”, which subsequently resulted in the formation of the Cane Growers’ Association (Makhanya, n.d.: 14 – 15).

The subsection on “Toti Farm” largely deals with the Umbumbulu Annual Agricultural Show, which was initiated by Major Hosken, “the Superintendent of Adams Mission” and his wife. The narrative slips between first and third person, which suggests that it includes Desmond Makhanya’s personal memoirs. This is reinforced by the level of detail given on available arts and crafts, prizes for the best produce and the entertainment, as well as the fact that the shows occurred throughout the 1940s and 1950s, at a time when he attended the college:

Entries included cattle, pigs, horses, and goats, chickens the entire farm produced like pumpkin and maize. Cakes, our food like “*isijabane*” [spinach porridge] and there was a dressmaker’s corner, arts and crafts, fresh vegetables the health inspectors had a corner where they made the people aware of the danger of tapeworms (16).

The subsection on the surveying of Adams Mission, which was carried out in 1921 by a German, Karl Schelling, points to *kholwa* ideals of land ownership in distinction to the communal land administered by chiefs:

It was surveyed to free hold properties for people to be full time farmers to supply the rest of the community with food stuffs, surveyed into arable, grazing lands and stands for building homesteads. School sports, business and public sites were also set aside in this surveying; access roads also came in this surveying programme to access every point in the Adams Mission reserve. Each resident had an occupation certificate with a number for a stand and a corresponding arable land to farm on for a living (17).

In conversation, Desmond Makhanya pointed out to me that the survey of the mission reserve made it administratively independent from the rest of the then Pinetown district (later Umbumbulu) but that after 1948 it was stripped of these powers by the apartheid government (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2011 April 01). Although the apartheid government halted progressive *kholwa* aspirations for land ownership, linked to sustainable livelihoods, in his manuscript he explained that the benefits of the survey were still felt in the present in terms of improved infrastructure:

The people of Adams Mission were promised free hold properties of their stands and the corresponding arable lands but it was not to be. Today we are under the eThekweni Municipality and the survey of access roads has been a great benefit as they are now upgrading them and the residents are quite happy (Makhanya, n.d.: 18).

Desmond Makhanya further claimed that at least one quarter of the land on the former Adams Mission remains freehold property, as does that of his direct lineage, the Makhubalos (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2011 April 01). The above suggests that there is an ambiguity about land rights that his work addresses. The manuscript does, to some degree, make a claim that certain Makhanya families like the Makhubalos had, and continue to have, a basis for access to land that is different from those governed by chiefly authority. Instead of traditional forms of land tenure and the chiefly allocation and control of land, their access is defined by freehold titles, and the surveying and allocation of land for civic institutions and infrastructure like schools, hospitals and roads. In light of the government's growing accommodation of chiefs and their role in local governance, which includes land allocation, the manuscript functions as a way of registering and securing access to land of a different kind.

### *General Education*

In the main, the section entitled “General Education in Adams Mission” once again gives details of “prominent principals both in Adams Combined and Adams Infant” and “prominent staff members”. These include those who had particular proficiency in music or language and renowned staff members like, “Dr J. L. Dube, who went overseas in the later part of the 1800’s, who returning from USA being highly qualified established Ohlange Institute” (Makhanya, n.d.: 19 – 20). Desmond Makhanya’s family occupies approximately a quarter of this section and their accomplishments in the areas of health, religion and education are repeated. In some instances the details are near verbatim of the “main history”. On the Nembula side, we again learn of Dr. Mavuma Nembula, who went to Michigan and became the first black doctor in southern Africa and his brother, Ira Newton Nembula, who established a mission station called Newtonville, near Creighton. According to the manuscript, the Makhubalos also contributed to the development of religion and the spread of education within the American Mission Board network throughout Natal and beyond. Rev. William Makhanya, a church minister established an American Mission Board Church in Durban and Jaja Makhanya, a teacher, built a church called Jaja Memorial and one of many satellite schools that:

became the Adams College Teacher Practicing schools accommodating grade 1, 2, 3 Teacher certificates and later higher Primary Teachers Certificate for those teachers who had passed the Junior Certificate. The spread of Education facilitated by teachers who graduated in Adams College going to their American Board Mission Stations dotted [sic] around Natal like to mention a few Groutville, Inanda, Umbumbulu, Imfume, Umthwalume, Umzumbe and Esidumbini on the North Coast and all other areas in Natal and beyond (20).

The section on education ends with a short paragraph on sports, which then leads into “Further Sports and Entertainment in Adams Mission”, a brief discussion of extramural

activities related to the college during the 1930s – 1950s. This is mainly a discussion of local soccer teams such as the Umbumbulu Ocean Swallows, the Union Jacks and Zulu Royals, and to a lesser extent, a discussion of music, choirs and the Adams Jazz Band.

### *Health Services*

“Health Services in Adams Mission / Adams College” begins by stating that Rev. Dr. Adams was also a medical doctor and that “the spread of the Gospel was helped by the health service in the Adams Mission area. The Adams College at that time was the centre of all health operations.” (Makhanya, n.d.: 27) Once more, health, or modern medicine, is associated with the arrival of the missionaries, a project that was continued by Desmond Makhanya’s forebears as the college remained:

a medical centre as we know that the offspring of Mbalasi Makhanya was the Dr. Mavuma John Nembula...the first Black Medical Doctor and District Surgeon in Southern Africa...and this was a great boost in the medical services in Adams Mission, although unfortunately he was transferred on promotion to KwaMaphumulo as a District Surgeon and died after an eleven year service in 1897 (27).

Desmond Makhanya’s ancestors continued in this vein with the arrival of Dr. McCord (a humanitarian missionary doctor after whom the present McCord’s Hospital is named), who founded a clinic at Adams College in the early 1900s “to further attend to the health services of the area.” (28) His grandmother, Kate Makhanya, became assistant and interpreter to the doctor and his wife. When McCord’s Hospital was set up in the Overport area of Durban, the mission clinic continued under the guidance of Josephine Makhanya, his mother, “who trained at McCord Hospital [and] extended the health services further to the peri-urban area of Adams Mission”. Josephine’s daughter-in-law then took over the running of the clinic, following which the KwaZulu bantustan

government initiated a health service, which lead to the demise of the one at Adams College until it was “resuscitated by the McCord [Hospital] through the pleadings of Desmond Makhanya the Chairman of ISO Le-Adams Child and Family Welfare Society who is also the son of Josephine and the grand son of Kate Makhanya” (28 – 30).

### *The American Missionaries*

In terms of religion, Desmond Makhanya writes that the missionaries were fundamental, not only in spreading the word of God, but also in promoting “community and social development” through “community choirs, social games, sports”, providing moral guidance, and establishing institutions that generated excellent students and religious ministers. The missionaries “must be thanked for their wonderful work they did in their preaching of the Gospel because it was always accompanied by practical acts, that made them to be strong in their mission work.” In his manuscript he gives details of how they built two girls schools (Umzumbe Home at Umzumbe Mission and Inanda Seminary at Inanda) and Adams College, asserting that, “the missionary work was really very outstanding in that all students from these institutions became students of note.” (Makhanya, n.d.: 30)

Missionaries were also “responsible for molding people’s characters as one can see the way the teachers were selected, they were to be responsible for teaching, guiding and giving sound moral lessons.” From these foundations, Desmond Makhanya maintains, mission work emanating from Adams Mission was seen as a catalyst for the creation of other mission stations such as those at Odidini, Umbumbulu and Mphusheni. He lists a



number of prominent black ministers related to Adams Mission and gives details of how graduates from the theological school went on to spread the gospel and set up mission stations throughout the country and as far afield as Mozambique (32, 34).

*“A History of Sports”*

The section on the history of sports in the Adams Mission Reserve begins with the statement: “All developments that were related to the community of Adams Mission and the College were very much influenced by the American Missionaries starting from Dr Adams” (Makhanya, n.d.: 35) Education “had to go hand in hand with the playing of sports as the Americans were form [sic] a developed country” (35). The notion of learning from the missionaries and then passing this knowledge on to others, is once again evident, an idea of development through engagement with modern ideas and practices. In this section, Desmond Makhanya recounts details of “sports development” at Adams College, including basketball, netball, baseball athletics, boxing and soccer and the way in which it accommodated “students from all over South Africa and beyond and exposed [them] to this kind of Sports Development environments, they did in turn plough back their sporting knowledge to their respective home areas, this is how sports were spread all over Natal and beyond” (36).

Desmond Makhanya has also included himself and the sporting achievements of his existing family into the contemporary history of the college under a subsection dedicated to tennis players. These include his role as a junior tennis coach at the school and the successes of his son, Thulasizwe, the “first Black Under 10 Tournament Champion and

SA College Champion” and his other children. His first daughter, Zamamakhanya, became “the most proficient player who was the first Black to win an Under 10 Tournament where Whites featured [and] to gain the Natal Colours when she won the Under 12 Natal BP Tournament”. She also became the SA College Tennis Singles Champ for three years while at KwaGqikazi College of Education and won the SA Black Association Singles, Mixed Doubles and Ladies Doubles, “using her brother Vama [his second son] for Mixed and Martha Shezi for Ladies Doubles for many times until 1989.” Thembekile Makhanya [his second daughter] was also a SA College Champion for three years while studying at Zakheni College of Education (37 – 38).

### *Music*

Music played an important part in life at the Adams College and in surrounding areas. During our discussions, Desmond Makhanya credited the spread of what he called “western music” to the missionaries and again lauded Adams College as a centre of music that contributed to the establishment of musical competitions at other, nearby schools. In this part of his manuscript, he gives details of popular local singers, jazz bands and church choirs, highlighting various music teachers as seminal in the college’s musical development. These include two Ngubanes, choir conductors, “who outperformed their predecessors and all other local Conductors of their time” and R.T. Caluza, a cousin of writers H.I.E and R.R.R Dhlomo, a prolific composer who did his music degree in London and wrote the Adams College school anthem. The musical achievements of Desmond Makhanya’s ancestors are also included in this section, notably Kate Makhanya who “went to England with an African Choir from Kimberly and

stayed there for over two years and sung in Buckingham Palace in the presence of Queen Victoria in 1891” and Nimrod Makhanya, her son, who created the African Glee Singers, a choir that toured nationwide. His “tenor was so strong that he was placed at a distance from the choir so that his voice could blend with other choristers” (Makhanya, n.d.: 41 – 42).

#### *The Industrial School and “Businesses in Adams Mission”*

The last two parts of the manuscript discuss the Industrial School at Adams College and businesses in Adams Mission. The final section provides only superficial detail on various shops and butcheries but it is worth noting the importance assigned to Mr O.N. Mohamed’s store, which included a post office and telephone exchange, both signs of modern telecommunications. The section on the Industrial School, headed by Dr Karl Breuckner, concentrates on its role in building projects at Adams College and the printing section, which served the college and its sister school, Inanda Seminary. Mr Samuel Bantu Makhanya (Desmond’s father), a printer by profession who was trained at the Ohlange Institute and had working experience on various newspapers such as the *Indian Opinion*, is given particular import as he also worked at the school’s printing press and produced the college magazine, *Iso Lomuzi* (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2011 April 01).

In addition to his manuscript on Adams College, Desmond Makhanya has produced fuller biographies of various prominent and lesser-known Makhanya people, including his mother, Josephine Makhanya, a district nurse at the Adams Mission clinic and Sibusisiwe

Makhanya, who was the first Zulu woman to train as a social worker in America in the 1920s and actively promoted women's rights. He has also documented the intertwined histories of his grandmother, Kate Makhanya and his great aunt, Charlotte Maxeke. The former was instrumental in the development of the Bantu Women's Society in Durban. The latter was a political and religious activist who founded the Bantu Women's League (which later became part of the ANC Women's League) and together with her husband, the Wilberforce Institute, under the auspices of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. I tried to access these documents but Desmond Makhanya explained that he did not know where they were. I also contacted Dr. Vukile Khumalo from whom I was able to source Desmond Makhanya's manuscript but he did not have copies of these biographies.

The above discussion points to the close relationship between Desmond Makhanya's manuscript and his sense of self. The manuscript is clearly a statement about modernity and a celebration of its advent in Umbumbulu – the development of schools, music, infrastructure, land rights and sports, amongst other things. It is also a proud record – a commemoration of the learnedness, status and achievements of Desmond Makhanya and the different members of his family. Furthermore, in various ways, the manuscript intersects with, and relates to, local and provincial heritage initiatives.

### **Celebrating, Honouring, Fundraising**

Municipal funding, particularly in under-serviced areas like Umbumbulu, tends to focus on the delivery of hard services such as roads and housing. As such, there are few official commemorative initiatives in the area. The Rural Area Based Management of eThekweni

Municipality was involved in heritage project detailing the life of unsung hero, Anton Lembede, who was instrumental in the formation of the ANC Youth League, the drafting of its manifesto and was its first elected president in 1944. He went on to serve in various ANC positions at provincial and national level before his death from intestinal complications at age 33 (SA History Online. n.d). The project entailed the recording of oral history interviews with Lembede's living relatives and there were, as yet unrealised plans to develop a heritage route and centre, detailing Lembede's life, his time at Adam's College in Umbumbulu and his influence on the early formations of the ANC (Ulwazi Programme Leader. personal communication, 2010 August 09).

At provincial level, with funding from the Office of the Premier, Dr. Vukile Khumalo has been tasked with conducting research on the impact of missionaries in KwaZulu-Natal. His research, in which Desmond Makhanya participated as a consultant, is part of the larger research initiative run by the premier's Heritage Unit that also included Siyabonga Mkhize's work on the Mkhize clan genealogy. Over the past four years, Khumalo has led a project to investigate six former mission stations south of Durban. These comprise Umzumbe, Amahlongwa, Mtwalume, Ifafa and in the wider Umbumbulu area, Imfume and Adams Mission. Some of the results of this research were published in the 2010 edition of the *Journal of History of Natal and Zululand*, entitled, "History and Heritage: A Special Issue on former American Board Mission Stations in Southern KwaZulu-Natal". The papers discussed, amongst other things, the last years of the Adams Mission, prominent figures connected to the mission stations, such as H.I.E Dhlomo and Ira Adams Nembula, the Natal sugarcane manufacturer. In keeping with governmental

recognition of the socio-economic value of heritage, there were also two papers documenting the socio-economic profiles of the six peri-urban and rural former mission stations and the potential to establish a heritage route to connect them.

The latter two papers are important in that they point to the way in which the past, and more specifically a *kholwa* heritage, is envisaged as a means of socio-economic upliftment in the present. The first is written by Vukile Khumalo and Ntokozo Zungu, a researcher from the eThekweni Municipality. It contains the results of questionnaires conducted between February 2007 and May 2008 in the six former American Board Mission Stations and is, in essence, a demographic study that investigates population composition (including age, occupation and level of education), sources of income, energy and water. Interviewees were also asked if they would be interested in having their church buildings or structures declared as heritage sites. Most responded positively to this and felt:

the idea “would be good to create employment for their youth”. Others felt the idea would help in the preservation of the church legacy in the politics of liberation in the country. “The church has produced statesmen”, argued a respondent from Adams. Respondents further argued that the gesture would help in the renovation of the buildings as they were struggling to raise funds in this regard (Khumalo and Zungu, 2010: 77).

The second paper, written by Gordon Fakude, also a lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, deals with the potential for religious heritage tourism in the areas surrounding the former mission stations. It gives details of the Heritage, Tourism and Community Development Project (HTCDP), a principal component of which is to “encourage community development through promotion of religious heritage tourism in order to stimulate local tourism-based production and services such as crafts, hospitality

accommodation and cultural/educational events in the Mission Stations.” (Fakude, 2010: 78) The HTCDP uses as a basis, the Tourism Product Development Strategy, which as Fakude writes, shows:

- The largest sectors of both domestic and foreign tourist-source markets are seeking a coastal destination for their leisure holidays; and
- The two main disappointments for departing foreign tourists was their lack of ability to interact with traditional culture and heritage, as well as wildlife (80).

The paper illustrates the way in which coastal mission stations as cultural heritage sites might fill this tourism gap and describes in detail, the potential for each former mission station to become a heritage tourism site, assessing factors such as the state of church and mission buildings, as well as proximity to the coast and other heritage routes. The Adams Mission church building has been rehabilitated with funding from the private sector and Nelson Mandela and the paper suggests that Adams Mission “has the best prospects for success as a tourist attraction (of all the mission stations visited) as it has a rich history and can be easily linked to major heritage routes and mass tourism attractions such as Durban and Amanzimtoti beaches nearby.” Adams College is also considered a drawcard for tourists as it is considered a leading institution where many “African leaders and intelligentsia were educated”. The paper calls for links with established heritage routes such as those of other *kholwa* institutions like Inanda and Ohlange as well as “community participation and mobilisation”, including, “individuals, such as Mr. [Desmond] Makhanya, [who] are knowledgeable about the area’s history and are keen to see the project take off. Such individuals should be drawn in and their knowledge utilised for the advancement of the project.” In the last part of the section on Adams Mission, the author

highlights the need for “a focus on collating and documenting the history of the mission station” (85).

Adams College is seen to have the most potential as a religio-heritage tourism site and would therefore function as an integral part of the proposed heritage route, and in relation to other heritage routes that incorporate *kholwa* institutions. A prime example is the Inanda Heritage Route, Woza eNanda, which features numerous exhibitions, including two at Gandhi’s Phoenix settlement, two at the Ohlange Institute, founded by John Dube and where Nelson Mandela cast his first vote, and one at the Inanda Seminary for Girls. In discussions with Mwelela Cele who is from Inanda, he explained to me that recognition of these sites as tourism attractions has resulted in tangible, yet at times, subtle, benefits for the area. He cited opportunities for local people to act as tour guides, additional policing to ensure the safety of tourists, improved roads and infrastructure on the heritage route, as well as a clause to ensure that a percentage of any construction related to the route was carried out by local people. He pointed out similar developments at the ex-Groutville Mission Station where the home of Chief Albert Luthuli, the first African to receive the Nobel Prize for Peace, has been turned into the Luthuli Museum. Local caterers were hired for events at the museum and the museum has also contributed to the development of tourist accommodation run by local people (Mwelela Cele, interview, 2011 November 24).

While the development of Adams Mission and College as a heritage tourism destination is in its formative stages, there are indications that plans to restore historic buildings and



develop the site are underway. On the 26 November 2011, the “Adams Legacy Dinner”, organised by Desmond Makhanya’s son, Thulasizwe, the school’s fundraiser, was held at the Durban City Hall. The college website stated:

The event is not just an ordinary dinner or reunion, it is far beyond that. It is a project. It is a springboard for the school to greater heights in CELEBRATING (Gala Dinner); HONOURING (Awards); FUNDRAISING (3R Project). It is an instrument to mobilize former students, educators and associates to be part of Adams College of Tomorrow (3R Project) and promote a culture to invest in our former schools. We intend to raise funds that will help to restore this historically rich institution so that it can continue to produce icons in education, politics, business, sport and other spheres (Adams College, n.d.b).

Attendees were able to buy tables in three tiers (platinum, gold and silver) and included special guests and former Adams College students such as Minister of Home Affairs, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, as well as the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Dr. Zweli Mkhize, and State President, Jacob Zuma. Zuma gave a speech in which he lauded the college for producing “some of the most outstanding leaders of the ANC and the country” and ensured the audience that he would “continue liaising with the Ministers of Arts and Culture and Basic Education, as well as the Premier of KZN, Dr. Zweli Mkhize, to be appraised on [the college’s] progress.” (Zuma, 2011) The second Legacy Dinner was held on 17 November 2012 at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg. It included a keynote address by Andrew Young, former US Ambassador to the United Nations and former mayor of Atlanta and a performance by multi Grammy Award-winning, Peabo Bryson. Tickets cost R3000 per ticket.

A promotional video on the college website reveals more about what the Adams College Trust Fund, formed by former students and the school governing body, hopes to achieve

with the 3R Project: “It looks to the future to revitalise, redevelop and reposition itself for greatness. And intends to reposition the college to its rightful level where it can be reconsidered as one of the premier education, technical, sporting, art and cultural institutions on the continent” (Adams College, n.d.b). Through the 3R Project (revitalisation, redevelopment and repositioning), a 12-year plan with four phases, the Trust Fund aims to:

- Improve and modernise teaching and learning
- Construct and restore school buildings
- Honour former students, educators and associates
- Celebrate and preserve the legacy and heritage of the college
- Instigate community development, tourism related projects as well as sport, music, art and cultural development programmes (Adams College, n.d.b).

The proposed mission stations tourism project dovetails with many of the aims of the 3R Project, as well as Desmond Makhanya’s aspirations for the wider dissemination of a particular version of the college history. Key to both the tourism project and the 3R Project is a detailed history of the Adams Mission Station and College, including the honouring of notable principals, members of staff, alumni and in all likelihood, a social history of lesser-known figures like the Makhubalos and Nembulas, particularly if Desmond Makhanya, the self-appointed college historian, were called upon to write it. These two projects would therefore address his dual agenda of elevating the profile of the college and its history, and acknowledging the contributions his ancestors have made to Adams College, Unibumbulu and beyond. They would also function as a means to stimulate development in the form of local socio-economic upliftment.

In as much as Desmond Makhanya has documented the historical developments brought by missionary ideas and the efforts of his ancestors, he is also concerned with development in the present. He is part of the Adams College governing body as well as civic organisations in Umbumbulu like the Iso Le-Adams Child and Family Welfare Society, and continually describes his work as “community development”. He also works with Dr. Dhlomo, the MEC for Health in the area, and local *amakhosi* on projects aimed at alleviating poverty through food production, which he explains is linked to primary health. These projects include a food growing programme and a “pigs and poultry” programme whereby people rear the animals and can keep the offspring.

### **A *Kholwa* Heritage?**

In his study of the Makhanya, D.H. Reader (1966: 339) writes: “The Makhanya have the reputation among their neighbours of being an ‘advanced’ people. The Christian element among the Mbo [Mkhize], for example, would almost certainly have been considerably smaller.” Reader’s statement, which presents the many mission-educated, Christian converts in the Makhanya area of Umbumbulu as learned and progressive in contrast to the *amabhinca* (literally “to put on”, “one who wears traditional Bantu dress”), their supposedly regressive, traditionalist neighbours, should not be accepted as fact. Writing in the early 1950s, Reader’s doctoral research (and later book) explored the “Zulu tribe in transition” by focussing on the “Makhanya of southern Natal”, who were seen as adopting informed, civilised ways as a result of the early arrival and influence of American missionaries in the area. These types of binaries (westernised, educated and Christianised versus traditional, *kholwa* versus traditionalists, and to a degree, Makhanya

versus Mkhize) are unhelpful if we embrace them as concrete categories. But by taking a critical stance towards them, they become useful in understanding the reasons why, and the ways in which, people in what is today Umbumbulu, subscribed and aspired to these social and political identities, how these perceived binaries were seen, and in many cases continue to be seen, as workable, salient categories that have endured to become part of a 'kholwa history' as advanced by Desmond Makhanya or a 'clan history', in the case of Siyabonga Mkhize, ensconced in what might be considered 'traditionalist politics'.

#### *The Makhanya and Mkhize*

Although Desmond Makhanya's manuscript has resonance with other mission stations and a broader *kholwa* inheritance, it tells a very local story, mainly focused on Adam's Mission, the later college and the surrounding Makhutha area, which is part of the larger Sobonakhona Traditional Authority Area in Umbumbulu. Within Sobonakhona and the neighbouring Mkhize areas, there exists significant variability. Clear distinctions between the Makhanya as former *kholwa*, advancing a particular *kholwa* past and the Mkhize engaged in traditionalist history and politics, cannot and should not be made. Reader's study in the mid-twentieth century acknowledges considerable differentiation amongst the Makhanya, with "no one area found to be exclusively Christian" and a number of cases of "mixed households", those in which "Christians" and "pagans" lived together (1966: 339). Desmond Makhanya also recounted the mixture of students at Adams College during his time there, including members of various traditional royal families at what was considered a modern educational institution. His aspirations to document a particular *kholwa* past seem to be different to those of his paternal grandson, Khetha, the

current Makhanya *inkosi* of Sobonakhona, who is a firm advocate of tradition, custom and traditional ways of living for the benefit of his constituencies. Khetha felt that “culture doesn’t change” and that by preserving it and a particular way of living, *amakhosi* help people to live properly (Inkosi Khetha Makhanya, interview, 2011 January 24).

The Makhanya and Mkhize have a long, complex and intertwined history of interactions with each other. During the reigns of kings Shaka and Dingane, Zulu expansionism and conflict within the Zulu kingdom led large numbers of people to migrate into the wider Port Natal area (as Durban was then known) and into the subsequent colony. Reader (1966: 23 – 24), citing Bryant, writes that in 1840, when the migrating Makhanya clan, part of the larger Qwabe grouping, arrived in what is now Umbumbulu, they found much of the area occupied by the Mkhize people, also immigrants from the north. He goes on to explain that translocation and intermarriage between Mkhize and Makhanya areas was commonplace, including marriage between the royal lineages. He writes that Mtambo, a Makhanya chief and son of Inkosi Makhutha, “as is customary in the case of the heir apparent, had been brought up in Mboland [Mkhize area] by his mother’s people” (84 – 85, 94, 229). Desmond Makhanya and Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize confirmed that the sister of Mkhize chief, Ngunezi, was indeed, Mtambo’s mother (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2011 August 03 and Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, personal communication, 2011 August 03). Reader (231 – 233) maintains that interactions between the Makhanya and Mkhize were largely peaceful until 1918 when, with growing pressures on land, the Mkhize made a claim to the Superintendent of Locations regarding the position of the

boundary between the Mkhize and Makhanya areas. This subsequently resulted in sporadic outbreaks of violent conflict between the two clans, mainly at Mkhize-Makhanya wedding celebrations, from late 1918 until 1924, when the superintendent, resettled the Mkhize-Makhanya boundary in consultation with both parties.

From the early to mid-1980s Umbumbulu was again wracked by local conflicts with varying and complicated allegiances (but predominantly between Mkhize and Makhanya groupings), which subsequently mutated into broader violence at political party level. Local explanations for the cause of the conflict are varied and vague, and include questions of land, fighting amongst *amakhosi* and revenge for killings that occurred a long time before. Mathis (2008) writes that the conflict began with a local dispute at a social gathering in Empandwini, in the Embo-Nkasa area, between some local Mkhize men and Mkhandi Shoji who was closely related to other Mkhizes living in the Makhanya area of Umbumbulu. The Embo-Nkasa chief intervened and Shoji fled to his Mkhize relatives in the Makhanya area of Umbumbulu, as his household and possessions were burnt by the Nkasa Mkhizes. From the Makhanya area, he and his supporters frequently attacked the Mkhize in Empandwini, resulting in the joining together of forces of two separate Mkhize groupings (Embo-Mkhize and Embo-Thimuni) against Shoji and the Makhanya. Although smaller than the Mkhize, Shoji's militia were successful in most of their battles and were greatly feared throughout Umbumbulu. The fighting between the Mkhize and Makhanya continued for just under two years, beginning and ending with major battles and with sustained smaller-scale fighting in the intermediate period. Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize explained that the Mkhize and Makhanya "are family"

and have now put this tumultuous past behind them. To illustrate this, he used the examples of his interactions with the young Makhanya *inkosi*, Khetha,: “He calls me *baba*, father”, a sign of respect in Zulu culture. At Inkosi Khetha Makhanya’s installation on 23 July 2011, Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize took five busloads of his people as guests and they were given a cow by the Makhanya chief as a show of good faith (Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize, personal communication, 2011 August 03).

The above illustrates the interrelatedness of the Mkhizes and Makhanyas in Umbumbulu through various mechanisms, including a long history of intermarriage, cohabitation as well as instances of violent conflict in the remote and recent present. This suggests fluidity, mixture and heterogeneity rather than clear-cut binaries like educated Makhanya *kholwa* versus Mkhize traditionalists. Yet, within this context, energies are devoted to producing very different understandings of the past. Siyabonga Mkhize, mainly concerned with what we might term a traditionalist history and politics, and Desmond Makhanya, whose focus is on a *kholwa* past, linked to the Adams Mission Station and College. The previous chapter explored the ways in which pre-Zulu clan histories and identities were mobilised in the present with a view to access resources such as land and government funding. Likewise, as we have seen, there is great potential to bring socio-economic development to Umbumbulu and beyond through the mobilisation of *kholwa* history, linked to Adams College and various mission stations.

### *A place in the historical record*

Desmond Makhanya's manuscript can be situated in a wider body of literature on Adams Mission, the later college, the Makhanya and studies on the *kholwa* in general. These include early manuscripts on the history of Adams College by the former Vice Principal and Head of Industrial School, G.C. Grant (Killie Campbell Collection, n.d.) and work on the history of the American Mission Board in South Africa by O.D. Dhlomo (1975). D.H. Reader's book, *Zulu Tribe in Transition: the Makhanya of Southern Natal* (1966) is more widely known. Biographical work has also been carried out on prominent Makhanya women such as Sibusisiwe Makhanya, who trained as social worker in America in the 1920s and along with Desmond Makhanya's grandmother, Kate Makhanya, actively promoted women's rights (Marks, 1987; McCord, 1997). There is also a host of broader studies that deal with the history of and politics of the *amakhholwa* (Marks, 1986; La Hausse, 2000; Hughes, 2011; Mokoena, 2011). Questions remain about the motivation behind the history that Desmond Makhanya has produced. Why the story of Adams Mission and College, the apparently modernising influence of the missionaries and his family's and other's interactions with them? Why a history of prominent *kholwa* members of his family, their achievements and contributions to South African society and not a traditionalist one that honours the lives of Makhanya *amakhosi* and *izinduna*? What, aside from its developmental potential, does he hope to achieve by producing and mobilising in the present a history of Adams College related to a wider *kholwa* past?

Desmond Makhanya's production is firstly a question of inheritance. One of the resources that we have at our disposal is that which we inherit. In Desmond Makhanya's



case, this is made up of his family's interactions with missionaries at Adams College, situated within the broader history of *kholwa* activities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Desmond Makhanya's manuscript suggests a desire for recognition of the college as part of the record of intellectual history of *amakholwa* in twentieth century Natal, linked to its notable alumni, which include John Dube, members of various royal families such as Mangosuthu Buthelezi and prominent figures like social worker Sibusisiwe Makhanya. The manuscript also reveals Desmond Makhanya's aspirations to write into the record the history of his immediate and extended family, those who are more widely known such as Kate Makhanya and Charlotte Maxeke, as well as the lesser-known ones such as his mother and himself. As he told me:

We are a family of history here. Charlotte Maxeke. SAS Charlotte Maxeke is a submarine named after her in Simonstown and there is also a hospital in Joburg [Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital]. She made it possible for the ANC Women's League to be established. The Wilberforce Institute in Evaton has been named after her, as has Beatrice Rd in Durban. My grandmother, the operating theatre [at McCord's Hospital] was named after her, Kate Makhanya Operating Theatre (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2011 April 01).

At a surface level, this could be construed as a simple desire for the intertwined histories of the missionaries of Adams Mission and College and Desmond Makhanya's family to be told. However, with the proposed 3R and mission station projects, there also exists the possibility of a more widespread circulation of Desmond Makhanya's version of this history, the opportunity of significant government funding and the potential for socio-economic development for Adams College and Umbumbulu through heritage tourism.

The overarching theme of Desmond Makhanya's manuscript is one of modernisation or development.<sup>2</sup> The early missionaries are portrayed as bringers of modern, advanced ideas and ways of doing things, which in turn generated *kholwa* protégés who continued and spread their modernising principles and work they had begun. In writing about the achievements of the college, its early missionaries, principals and prominent alumni, Desmond Makhanya is simultaneously writing the history of *kholwa* members of his immediate and extended family and their accomplishments in the fields of education, health, sport, music, agriculture and religion. He is also writing into the record the achievements of other local *kholwa* individuals and families. His manuscript is far from complete. It is a largely unedited document that includes repeated sections and various syntactical and spelling errors. In many instances it lacks a coherent narrative and rather than a production of history, functions more as a collection of records, a list of names of particular families that he feels have contributed to the social and political fabric of Umbumbulu and beyond. In this way, it troubles clear distinctions between custodianship of a collection of sources or records, and the production of a version of history. Rather, the concept of curation, allows for a better understanding of Desmond Makhanya's activities. The production of his manuscript exhibits a preservatory impulse as with it, he wished to record and preserve the history of Adams College and the achievements of his and other *kholwa* families. However, alongside this custodial tendency, he gave authority to certain figures, events and narratives. Desmond Makhanya made meaning of the past by selectively organising and presenting, by curating, a particular version of it.

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<sup>2</sup> The word "development" is mentioned 30 times in the 56-page document.

Desmond Makhanya's manuscript is more than just a family history. Rather, it is an assertion of a place in history, a claim on modernity through the mobilisation of a *kholwa* past and achievements centred on Adams College. What that *kholwa* past constitutes, however, is open to debate. In interviews, Desmond Makhanya proclaimed that Adams College was a "sanctuary for *ubukhosi*", or chiefship, in reference to the students from various royal families who attended the school (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2010 July 05). He went on to claim that the Shaka Day (now Heritage Day) celebrations, held annually on 24 September to commemorate the Zulu king and used as a political tool by Mangosuthu Buthelezi to promote Inkatha ideology, were derived from Adams College and adopted by Buthelezi who was a student there (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2010 January 19). The above examples reveal a seemingly incongruent relationship between what are considered traditional, royal families and what is seen as a modern, *kholwa* institution and blur clear distinctions about what might be seen as 'traditional' or '*kholwa* / modernised'. Similarly, Desmond Makhanya's claim on modernity is one that is rooted in a *kholwa* past with an historically complex and ambiguous relationship to tradition and the Zulu monarchy, which I discuss in more detail below.

#### *Kholwa as a category*

Desmond Makhanya asserted that the history he has produced is a *kholwa* story but a clear definition of what this means is difficult to establish. Houle writes that there are essentially two impressions that historians have formed of *amakholwa*. The first and less flattering is of those for who secular needs and not religion was central to *kholwa* conversion. Initial adherents (at least) were seen as:

a scorned minority, the flotsam and jetsam of society washed up onto the mission stations and converting, in large part, because they had no other place to go. Few *amakholwa* came into the Christian fold for purely religious reasons... and even missionaries themselves were often forced to acknowledge the less than stellar identity of their flock (Houle, 2001).

The second and more popular notion of *kholwa* is that of a mission-educated Zulu elite who rose to positions of leadership in Zulu society, formed cultural and political organisations like *Inkatha kaZulu* and the African National Congress that sought to unify the black population in the rural areas of Natal in the 1920s in attempts to defend their rights to vote and buy land (Harries, 1993). These efforts entailed significant political navigation, including the negotiation of matters relating to tradition, the past and the Zulu royal family. The term *kholwa* too easily bifurcates those who converted to Christianity from those who did not. As R.K. Myeza, a former student of Adams College and an historian on early mission stations, is quoted as saying:

The American Board of Zulu Mission (as it became known) failed to make Zulus Americans and also failed to make them Christians, but succeeded to inspire them to reach higher levels of education beyond their bench mark of elementary and primary schools (Historic Schools Restoration Project, n.d).

In reality, being *kholwa* was characterised by fluidity, ambiguity and mediation on various levels, in both the political arena and in everyday life. Hlonipha Mokoena's critique of the term *kholwa* is evident in her treatment of Magesa Fuze who attended Bishop John W. Colenso's Ekukhanyeni School in Bishopstowe in the nineteenth century. Baptised as a Christian in 1859, Fuze went on to become Colenso's printer and assistant and one of the first writers in Zulu. His book *Abantu Abamnyama Lapa Bavela Ngakona* (The Black People and Whence They Came) was published in 1922, the year of his death. Mokoena uses his life to reveal the more nuanced social and political understandings that were subsumed under the generic category '*kholwa*'. Instead of being

wholly Christianised or Zulu, Fuze is portrayed as an amalgamation of the two, a transcultural product generated within the contact zone produced by colonisation (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2003: 118).

This type of heterogeneity was not limited to Natal's Christianised African intelligentsia. Heather Hughes, writing on John Dube, the founder and first president of South African Native National Congress (SANNC), American Board of Missions minister and perhaps the most well-known *kholwa* figure, provides various examples of the interplay between local and colonial sets of ideas and people, which generated new ways of thinking and being within a new, shared space. Mqhawe, the Qadi *inkosi* and Dube's cousin, for example, donated the land to establish the Zulu Christian Industrial School, later known as Ohlange, and, alongside mission-educated *kholwa*, served on its first Board of Trustees (Hughes 2011: 92 -- 94). His support for *amakholwa*, which "had coalesced around the Dube even became an influential factor in the outcome of such momentous mission station decisions as who the local pastor would be" (Hughes and Cele, 2012). In a tussle over the pastorate for the Inanda church in which Dube's opponents contested his appointment, claiming that a man of the cloth should not have "tribal affiliations", Mqhawe showed his support for Dube and named him the "*umfundisi wamaQadi*" or "pastor of the Qadi" (Hughes, 2011: 91). Mqhawe voluntarily sent several of his children to school and allowed schools to be built on his land. He also developed strong relationships with missionaries from the American Zulu Mission who built the Inanda Mission Station on land on which his homestead and those of many of his followers were situated. Through these agreeable relationships, which included sociable activities like

hunting, Mqhawe was able to call on his missionary contacts to assist him to buy land, secure goods and to mediate with the government on his behalf. Among these “*Qadi omhlophe*”, those who had been given the title of “white Qadi”, were missionaries, prominent colonist landowners and politicians such as Marshall Campbell and George Shearer Armstrong (99). A similar anomaly can be found in Madikane, Mqhawe’s *incek*u, his closest confidant and adviser. Madikane also served on Ohlange’s Board of Trustees and maintained close associations with Mqhawe and John Dube. Quite late in life he decided to become a Christian, studied at Adams Mission, renounced polygamy and proceeded to live away from two of his three wives and their children. Madikane established an outstation of the Inanda mission at Amatata, all the while continuing to act as Mqhawe’s *incek*u as he had done previously (83).

If the complexity and messiness of everyday life resisted easy categorisation of *kholwa* and traditionalists, *kholwa* politics in the early twentieth century presented an equally paradoxical relationship to tradition and the Zulu royal family. While the segregationist South African state promoted its own variant of ethnicity and separate development, Dube and others increasingly gravitated towards the notion of a unifying Zulu ethnic nationalism, which resulted in *kholwa* landowners, clergy, clerks, interpreters and teachers becoming among the most ardent supporters of the Zulu monarchy (Marks, 1986: 45). The Zulu royal house and chiefs looked to an historic Zulu identity to support their waning status and power while the aspirant black petite bourgeoisie sought to mobilise the masses to protect their right to vote and buy land. The advent of printed materials in colonial Natal facilitated the *amakholwa*’s unifying objectives as mission

stations often housed printing presses and printing was taught as part of industrial training. Mokoena (2011: 11, 20 – 21) argues that print culture in Natal created the space for the expression of a specific type of collective consciousness in the form of an ethnic nationalism. Desmond Makhanya's father, for example, educated at the Ohlange Institute, was a printing instructor at Adam's College and published *Iso Lomuzi*, the college's magazine. Magema Fuze was also a print technician at Bishop John Colenso's Ekukhanyeni Mission Station and published regularly in the Zulu-English newspaper, *Ilanga laseNatal*.

By encouraging the idea of a shared past and representing the king and Zulu language as traditional symbols that bound Zulu-speakers in a new and expanded political state, men like Dube, Pixley kaIsaka Seme, his close colleague and later president of the ANC, and George Champion, leader of the Industrial and Workers' Unions, were able to assert symbols and modes of resistance compatible with their own survival and unite disparate rural communities, uprooted and unsettled by colonialism, into a powerful ethnic alliance that found a sense of security in a new, traditional 'Zulu' identity (Harries, 1993: 112). Much of this new ethnic identity was consolidated in the milieu of culture. Cope (1993: 258) maintains that the *Inkatha kaZulu*, the Zulu National Congress, a cultural initiative formed in 1924, functioned to assuage political disappointments by celebrating Zuluness and to assert socio-political control by defining the ideological content of an ethnic nationalism to which many Zulu speakers were susceptible. In 1935, the Natal Bantu Teachers' Association established a Zulu Society that promoted the Zulu language, literature and folklore, a Zulu cultural identity, with Dube as its first president and king

Solomon's son, Mshiyeni, as its honorary patron (Marks, 1986: 71). The above points to a history of complex and ambiguous negotiations by nineteenth-century *kholwa* in Natal in relation to tradition, custom and the Zulu monarchy, as well as the fluidity contained within the category *kholwa*. As Marks (1986: 73) writes:

For Dube, and for others like him, the central ambiguity of nationalism was rendered even more equivocal by his need to simultaneously espouse nineteenth-century liberal and missionary norms against settler nationalism on the one hand, and to call on the masses while defending his own position against the masses on the other.

In the present, there are also ambiguities surrounding Desmond Makhanya, who is motivating for a particular version of *kholwa* history, linked to Adams College but for whom the world of tradition is not absent. This was apparent to me when I first met Desmond Makhanya and he described himself with reference to his father's association with the Ohlange Institute, a renowned *kholwa* centre of learning, and also to his ancestors, the *amakhosi* Makhutha and Duze:

As you know, I am Desmond Mandlakhe Makhanya, born of Samuel Bantu Babi Makhanya. My grandfather is Indeya Makhanya, my great grandfather Makhubalo. The many Makhanya people emanate from *Inkosi* Duze whose offspring are the people who have settled in this area. My father was a printing instructor. He was taught at Ohlange. Our family tree is Makhubalo. The other offshoot, the eldest son of Duze, is Makhutha who was a chief here (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2010 July 05).

He went on to explain that his great grandfather, Makhubalo, was asked to be the chief of Adams Mission, in the same way that Chief Albert Luthuli was appointed the "*inkosi* of the *amakholwa*" at Groutville Mission Station (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2011 April 01). Today, Desmond Makhanya's grandson is the current Makhanya *inkosi*, Khetha Makhanya, a fervent believer in the power of tradition and custom. At his installation as chief in July last year, "all the houses [descendants] of Duze" were in



attendance, some wearing *imvunulo*, full traditional regalia while others, like Desmond Makhanya, were dressed in suits and ties. As he made clear: “We grew up with missionaries and they had an impact on our behaviour. It is a choice. We are a mixed bag” (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2011 April 01).

In various interviews, Desmond Makhanya shared details about his family and local people that point to similar variability. When I asked him about the difference between *amabhinca* traditionalists and the *amakholwa* he remembered: “On the southern side there were more *amabhinca* who did *ingoma*<sup>3</sup> dancing”, whereas the Makhanya side, there we more *amakholwa*. He qualified this by stating, as we have seen, that Adams College advocated mixed ways of living, offering a safe haven to those who were considered traditionalists and *amakholwa* alike, and reiterating that the college was large and also helped *amabhinca*, by taking “them to McCord’s [Hospital] if they were gored by a bull or something like that” (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2011 January 19). Gravesites in Umbumbulu add further texture to the mixed interactions and relationships that must have constituted daily life around Adams Mission and College. Desmond Makhanya explained that in 1921 the Adams Mission area was surveyed by a German, Karl Schelling, following which the cemetery became communal. Those buried in Adam’s Mission Cemetery include Makhanya *amakhosi* Lugobe and Makhubalo, Desmond Makhanya’s great grandfather, *amakholwa* like Desmond Makhanya’s father, mother and grandparents, Kate Makhanya, as well as Rev Dr. Newton Adams, the founder of the mission station. The rest of the *amakhosi* are buried Kwasunduzwayo, a chiefly burial ground (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2010 July 05). The ambiguities

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<sup>3</sup> The Zulu term *ingoma* (lit. song) covers a broad range of male group dances.

surrounding Desmond Makhanya, on the one hand, engaging with tradition and custom, and on the other, a *kholwa* past, are further unearthed in his desire for heritage sites to celebrate the area's history. As part of what he calls his "development work", he expressed a desire to set up a heritage site or cultural village, either to remember *amakhosi* like Dabulesakhe, Lugobe and Makhutha or to honour renowned *kholwa*, Anton Lembede, at Madundube, where his remains (exhumed from Kliptown) are now buried. He further suggested that a park with a monument of King Shaka next to the nearby Amanzimtoti River was "on the cards. This will allow for a centre to have Shaka Day celebrations. King Zwelithini [the current Zulu king] gave me a representative to look into this, so it will be developed in close contact with the Zulu royal family" (Desmond Makhanya, interview, 2010 July 05).

## **Conclusion**

While the previous chapter dealt with clan identities and how these function to challenge the overarching notion of a homogenous Zulu identity, the issues at stake around the preservation and production of the past in Umbumbulu are not confined to matters of tradition and custom alone. Desmond Makhanya has devoted his energies to the preservation of a *kholwa* past, a modernist identity that transcends clan politics and also counters a traditionalistic notion of homogenous Zulu identity as advanced by Inkatha. He has written the history of the Adams College and its many well-known alumni, which has wider resonance in present-day KwaZulu-Natal and beyond, as part of the record of intellectual history of *kholwa* in twentieth century Natal. More specifically, this history has meaning for the Makhanya of Umbumbulu, and in particular, Desmond Makhanya's

lineage, the Makhubalos and Nembulas. Relatively little has been written about Adams College and the many prominent *kholwa* intellectuals who attended the school and Desmond Makhanya sought recognition for a neglected archive, for his version of the intertwined histories of the Makhanya and Adams College to enter the record and be preserved for the future. He wrote about his forefathers, making a claim on modernity and a claim to a place in history.

Desmond Makhanya also realised the socio-economic potential of the school's history. He exhibited a deep desire for development and has begun to mobilise this history to achieve it. National and provincial government interest in the restoration of the church and school buildings at Adams College, the fundraising efforts of his son and the prospect of it becoming a religio-heritage site, point not only to the possible socio-economic developments that have been experienced on other heritage routes near Inanda and Groutville, but also for the wider circulation of Desmond Makhanya's version of the college history, greater acknowledgment of its alumni and the achievements of Desmond Makhanya's family. The language of modernism, which early twentieth century *kholwa* employed in order to protect private property ownership and individual rights, including the right to vote, shares much of its vocabulary with that of development. Whereas *amakholwa* utilised the idea of a shared Zulu past as means to unite disparate communities in Natal under a purposefully socially engineered 'traditional Zulu' identity, the history of prominent *kholwa* figures from renowned institutions like Ohlange, Inanda Seminary and Adonis College is now being used in terms of a new agenda in which the officialisation of this history is seen to have the potential to bring socio-economic

upliftment in the present.

The Premier's Office has also comprehended the potential of this history. The various heritage projects run through the Office of the premier's Heritage Unit focus on historical and cultural aspects of the province, linked to tourism and underpinned by broad-ranging knowledge production. Through them, the premier wants to make a long-lasting contribution to the province and leave a legacy of multidisciplinary knowledge production. They include a large scale, multidisciplinary research and publication project on the province's pre-colonial history, which entails looking at the multitude of smaller chiefdoms, identities, customs and traditions that existed before the assimilating rise of the Zulu and a project that focuses on a *kholwa* heritage, and the role and impact of missionaries in Natal. Both projects include consultations with, and contributions from local, non-professional historians like Siyabonga Mkhize and Desmond Makhanya. Through this research, the premier aims to enter into the record a more diverse, non-singularly Zulu, and with the work on mission stations, not merely traditionalist, history of the region that is now KwaZulu-Natal. Importantly, this type of work serves a political agenda because, equally fraught with ambiguity, the profile of the ANC government in contemporary KwaZulu-Natal is to be simultaneously modernist and engaged with tradition and custom.

## ***Chapter Six – Conclusion***

A great deal of academic research has been generated on the ways in which the past in the KwaZulu-region has been mobilised for political aims. There is an established body of literature that deals with the consolidation of a broad Zulu ethnic consciousness in the first quarter of the twentieth century (Marks, 1986; Cope, 1993; Hughes, 2011; Mahoney, 2012). There also exists a considerable amount of writing on modern Zulu nationalism, linked to the Inkatha movement in the period from the 1970s to the 1990s (Maré and Hamilton, 1987; Golan, 1991; Maré, 1992; Harries, 1993; Hamilton, 1998). The different incarnations of Inkatha – the first in the 1920s and the second in the 1970s under Mangosuthu Buthelezi – were established in different political climates and functioned under different circumstances. However, both of these Zulu nationalist movements promoted a particular version of the past, rooted in sets of ideas about tradition and custom that resonated with those endorsed by the governments of the time.

The Union government established the Native Affairs Department and in the late 1920s advanced a policy of re-tribalisation, while during apartheid the state supported separate development and divisions along ethnic lines. Opposition to Zulu nationalism, particularly during the apartheid era, often took the form of resistance to tradition and custom. During this time, debates around Zuluness were dominated, on the one hand, by Mangosuthu Buthelezi calling for Zulu ethnic solidarity by promoting the idea of a common history amongst Zulu-speakers and, on the other, by revisionist historians and academics, attempting to unravel Inkatha's promotion of a homogenous Zulu past. Although at times, Buthelezi made reference to academic research on Zulu history,

notably the work of Inkatha-aligned scholars like S. J. Maphalala, he relied heavily on an archive of Zulu cultural symbolism, including traditions, customs, traditional dress, the Zulu royal family, the current king, Goodwill Zwelithini, and the figure of the first Zulu king, Shaka, as a unifier of the “Zulu nation” (Harries, 1993). In making claims on the past, Buthelezi was able effectively to employ these cultural resources in the political arena, primarily as they functioned within the realm of tradition and custom, and were presented as inaccessible to ‘outsiders’. As an *inkosi*, part of the Zulu royal family and leader of the Zulu-centric Inkatha, Buthelezi positioned himself as a gatekeeper, controlling access to, and custodianship over, Zulu tradition and custom. Although academics were able to use archival materials and records like the *James Stuart Archive*, Buthelezi’s authority prevented a contemporary engagement with the realm of tradition and custom, including by black South Africans like Mzala (the pseudonym of Jabulani Nobleman Nxumalo), an ANC-affiliated academic researcher who wrote a disparaging account of Buthelezi and Inkatha in his book, *Gatsha Buthelezi: Chief with a Double Agenda* (1988).

For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the region that is today KwaZulu-Natal, there was a concerted effort to hold the tribal subject in a domain of tradition and custom that was separate from the bureaucratic domain of the democratic citizen. The secondary literature suggests that during these periods, matters amongst the chiefs, between them and those over whom they had authority, almost without exception, only entered the record at the point at which these matters were relayed to government officials. However, the research presented in this thesis has shown that in the post-

apartheid period, the realm of tradition and custom intersects in increasingly direct ways with a bureaucratic system of records. This has opened up new cultural and political spaces in which a multitude of custodial and record-keeping forms and practices are evident, often in settings not conventionally associated with archives and custodianship, but also with an awareness of how these practices might intersect with more conventional archival efforts.

This thesis has offered a study of tradition, custom, indigenous knowledge and a range of contemporary activities and practices involved in the management of the past in Umbumbulu, and the work that the past is made to do by various actors in the present. It has been specifically concerned to examine how inherited materials pertinent to the past are husbanded and managed in the present, which I have referred to and conceptualised in the thesis as ‘custodianship’. By focusing on Umbumbulu in a changed political setting, the thesis has shown something of the ways in which the exertion of custodianship over bodies of knowledge of the past in various forms – tradition, custom, indigenous knowledge, personal, institutional and clan histories – is linked to efforts to gain access to land and state resources, as well as to questions of identity and the operations of power in present-day KwaZulu-Natal.

Chapter Two argued that the seemingly democratised and desirable bureaucratic environment in which the Ulwazi Programme operates, while facilitative in certain respects, is, in fact, constraining, allowing only certain kinds of ‘indigenous knowledge’ (characterised to a large extent, by the recording of Zulu traditions and customs) to

surface while other forms of knowledge and histories are precluded. Nevertheless, my research showed that the histories of pressing social issues such as poverty, dispossession and identity surfaced through the Ulwazi Programme's loosely defined notion of indigenous knowledge and were contained on the Ulwazi Wiki. My analysis in Chapter Three showed mounting pressure on the *amakhosi* to defend and preserve their roles as the primary custodians of tradition and custom but also to bow to an administrative regime in which accountability is upheld through the documentary record. I argued that although the balance of power has shifted to the ANC municipality, an important body of knowledge that the *amakhosi* still command, and indeed, embody, is the complex array of things rooted in understandings of the past and captured under the notion of tradition and custom. Chapter Four documented the practices of Siyabonga Mkhize, a local historian and praise poet of the Mkhize clan. In the chapter, I argued that his activities in particular demonstrated an overlap between the custodial and productive, revealing the blurred line between custodianship of sources and the production of a version of history. Siyabonga Mkhize's book was an intervention into the longstanding succession debate over the Mkhize chieftaincy, which reflected local struggles over the meaning of clan histories but was also indicative of, and had a bearing on, a changing political environment in which the nationalistic impulses of a number of clans were evident and not restricted to the Mkhizes alone. Siyabonga Mkhize considered himself to perform a special role in recording and preserving the history of the Mkhizes. While he used a particular, vernacular form to do this, he did so in a way that engaged actively with contemporary demands for the production of documentary records. Victor Mkhize also felt that he held a unique position as an *ikhombabukhosi*, a role that his forebears had traditionally



performed and which he believed had a significant bearing on intra-Mkhize relations and the principal royal house. Chapter Five dealt with Desmond Makhanya's contemporary production and preservation of a *kholwa* history. In the chapter, I put forward the argument that in writing the institutional history of the Adams College and mission station, Desmond Makhanya was in fact making a claim on modernity and inserting his family's past into the record of the intellectual history of *amakholwa* in twentieth-century Natal. He also saw the officialisation of the college history to have the potential to bring socio-economic upliftment to his area in the present.

### **Recording-making Aspirations and Anxieties**

The thesis has shown numerous locations in Umbumbulu in which the past is being dealt with and where custody of the past is actively managed. These activities showed the resources that were marshalled as evidence to validate particular claims, as well as the ways in which these materials were made available to the public. The thesis has demonstrated how different actors in contemporary Umbumbulu exhibited record-making aspirations and anxieties. There were those who sought or aspired to a fixed record in the form of a book, a repository or as written content on a website on the Internet, as means to address a wider public or as a form of potential validation of their claims. Conversely, there were those who were wary of this type of structure and the potential repercussions of its fixedness.

The Ulwazi Programme, Siyabonga Mkhize and Desmond Makhanya all sought to enter material into the record. The Ulwazi Programme and Desmond Makhanya considered

desirable, and aspired to, an explicitly fixed configuration of materials and a concrete written record, which opened up the possibility for validation as an official, authorised record but also as one made available for others to interpret or critique. The Ulwazi Programme saw itself as collecting knowledge about the past, filed under heritage and indigenous knowledge, and acting as a custodian and preserver thereof. It actively desired the public to utilise the resources contained within its repository. Likewise, Desmond Makhanya had record-making aspirations. He wanted the history of Adams College to be preserved and for his version of the past to be acknowledged in concrete and authoritative terms through the production of a book, a cultural artefact that he regarded as having fixity and longevity. Historically, the printed text was an important instrument in informing and rallying *kholwa* communities against an increasingly suppressive South African state. For Desmond Makhanya, the book thus served as concrete record and in reference to the intellectual history of *amakholwa* in Natal for whom the printing press and written word were so important in fighting their cause.

In contrast to this, the *amakhosi* were wary of this type of fixity and the effect it could have on the fluidity of traditions and customs, custodianship of which has long determined their authority. Throughout the colonial and apartheid eras, access to resources for Zulu-speaking inhabitants of what is now KwaZulu-Natal has been determined in reference to loosely defined bodies of tradition and custom, the custodians of which have been chiefs, recognised by the colonial and later apartheid governments. In the present, custodianship of these bodies of knowledge is a contested source of power between the *amakhosi* and local government. There exists a tension between different

modes of governance: on the one hand, the new modern democracy, which emphasises citizens with individual rights and responsibilities, and on the other, chiefly governance based on the traditional and customary, which conceives of people as chiefly subjects.

Through initiatives like the Ulwazi Programme, the local ANC government seeks to define tradition and custom for a broader constituency and to position itself as a custodian of far-reaching and inclusive categories like “heritage” and “indigenous knowledge”. These categories overlap considerably with tradition and custom, which the government has begun to gain access to and officialise through projects like the Ulwazi Programme. The data presented in this thesis has shown that the *amakhosi* had anxieties about the potential effects of formalised local government on their power, and the ways in which it could impinge on their control and use of loosely defined traditions and customs. In spite of this, by their birthrights, the *amakhosi* maintain a unique position as the determiners of tradition and custom. *Amakhosi* from Umbumbulu explained that the *inkosi*’s authority was conferred to him through his bloodline. They believed that the *inkosi* was not appointed but born into his role, one that was created for him by the *amadlozi* or ancestors. Therefore, the *amakhosi*, including those who are ANC-aligned, remain the primary determiners of the meaning of tradition and custom, and in a non-institutionalised environment, the custodians thereof.

The case of Siyabonga Mkhize revealed both record-making aspirations and anxieties. In 2007, he wrote a book that offered a selective version of the history of the Mkhize, which favoured the Embo-Nkasa line as the principal royal house and the current *inkosi*,

Kusakusa Mkhize, as the rightful heir. With his book, Siyabonga Mkhize aspired to enter into the record a version of the history of the Mkhize people and claims for the principal royal house. However, there was contestation surrounding his work, which led to him withdrawing his book from circulation. The limited circulation of Siyabonga Mkhize's book speaks of power struggles. His activities exposed intra-Mkhize disputation and a major struggle between the Zulu royal house, which seeks to maintain its historic monopoly and custodianship of generic Zulu traditions and customs, and other cultural movements, calling for the recognition of their pre-Zulu customs, traditions and identities. His claim for recognition of a certain lineage and a particular pre-Zulu Mkhize clan history posed a risk not only to other branches of the Mkhize but, alongside similar claims by other clans like the Ndwandwe, Qwabe and Nhlanguwini, a direct threat to the authenticity and power of the Zulu king as a custodian and symbol of a unified Zulu nation. As such, his initial desires for acknowledgment through a fixed record in the form of his book gave way to its retraction and growing anxieties.

### **Custodianship, the production of history and curation**

Contemporary practices involved in the management of the past in Umbumbulu revealed a blurring between the seemingly distinct activities of exerting custodianship over materials pertinent to the past, on the one hand, and on the other, the production of historical accounts. The thesis has shown that in some instances, the work being done concerning the past straddles both custodial and productive practices, inviting a re-evaluation, or at least a muddying, of clear-cut notions of the custodianship of sources and the production of particular narratives of the past. While historians and archivists

frequently think of these activities as separate, my research data revealed that they were intertwined in practice. This is perhaps most obvious in the case of Siyabonga Mkhize's activities. In writing his history of the Mkhize, he claimed to convene disparate pieces of information in order to constitute a whole and to preserve it for others' use, which suggests a custodial role. Yet, his reconstruction of Mkhize history entailed the production of a particular version of the past, focussing on the Embo-Nkasa line and making a claim for Inkosi Kusakusa Mkhize as the head of the principal royal house. Siyabonga Mkhize's role as an *imbongi* or praise poet also lent itself to selective representation and the production of a specific version of the past. While he acted as a custodian of oral sources of history, through his performance he selected and rejected different elements of the past in producing a version of it. While it may seem that the *amakhosi* acted merely as custodians of tradition and custom, they too, exhibited selective tendencies. Their custodianship of tradition and custom was characterised by their ability to mould and adapt it. *Amakhosi* in Umbumbulu determined what did and did not constitute tradition and custom and therefore what they had custodianship over. Recognising these bodies of knowledge as resources, they chose in which contexts to employ them in terms of transmitting social values, maintaining social order and preserving links with the ancestors.

Issues at stake around the preservation and production of the past in Umbumbulu are not confined to matters of tradition and custom. Desmond Makhanya has devoted his energies to the preservation of a particular *kholwa* past. Relatively little has been written about Adams College and the many prominent *amakholwa* intellectuals who attended the

school. Desmond Makhanya sought recognition for a neglected archive, for his version of the intertwined histories of the Makhanyas (and in particular his lineage, the Makhubalos) and Adams College, and wished for it to enter the record. He also played a custodial role and, like Siyabonga Mkhize and the Ulwazi Programme, aimed to preserve a version of the past for future generations. However, also like Siyabonga Mkhize, Desmond Makhanya's activities trouble hard and fast distinctions between a custodian and a producer of history. In places, his manuscript functioned more as a collection of records, of sources, a list of names of people and families, over which he had custody, rather than a cohesive historical narrative. I had difficulty in categorising his activities and defining him, as terms like local historian, custodian, author and a producer of history all applied to the roles that both he and Siyabonga Mkhize performed.

The thesis has shown that the Ulwazi Programme was overtly custodial but implicitly productive. It was confident in its record-making aspirations but was constrained by broad categories (indigenous knowledge and heritage) and took an uncritical stance towards generic notions of Zuluness. Yet, searches for commonly used collective nouns like clan, tribe and *isizwe* (a Zulu term which ranges in meaning from clan to ethnic grouping to nation) revealed histories of the Luthuli, Cele, Qadi and Mkhize clans, as well as various mission stations in and around Umbumbulu. The Ulwazi Programme desired to collect indigenous knowledge and provided the infrastructure to do so. Yet, this desire to collect knowledge was not confined to the collection and preservation of sources. In its collection policy, the Ulwazi Programme drew no clear distinction between sources and produced knowledge, in effect no clear distinction between the custodial and

the productive. It simultaneously preserved and produced a particular type of history and that which entered the Ulwazi Programme, entered, like any record, as the product of a complex process of construction and selection.

Instead of stewards of historical materials or authors of definitive and synthesised histories, the subjects of my study might better be described as curators of the past. The activities of the Ulwazi Programme, Siyabonga Mkhize and Desmond Makhanya all offered clear signs of curatorial activity, which includes both the preservatory aspects of custodianship and the productive aspects involved in the public display of a particular history. In each case, they aimed to “look after and preserve” historical materials. Yet, at the same time, they selected, organised and highlighted certain aspects of the materials for active presentation in order to achieve specific aims. The Ulwazi Programme, which aligns itself with municipal and national policy in order to secure funding, curated materials within a particular notion of indigenous knowledge, linked to municipal and national government aims and priorities. Siyabonga Mkhize aimed to enter into the record a particular version of the Mkhize past but also recognised the potential of his claim to gain access to land and state resources. Similarly, Desmond Makhanya desired to record and preserve the history of Adams College and the achievements of his and other *kholwa* families, cognisant of the socio-economic potential of the school’s history. In the cases of Siyabonga Mkhize and Desmond Makhanya, curation emerged as an important tactic for the mobilisation of marginalised historical claims and materials.

### **Probing Zuluness**

During the latter part of the apartheid era in what is now KwaZulu-Natal, the interlinked cultural and political arenas were dominated, on the one hand, by a sense of the ANC as a modern movement, striving for civil rights for all citizens and, on the other, by Inkatha as a traditionalist Zulu movement, reliant on, and supportive of, the structures of the KwaZulu bantustan and the systems of chiefs. Although in reality the situation was far more complex, with a variety of allegiances and heterogeneity within the broader divisions, this separation was reinforced through control of the production of specific versions of the past, linked to political aims. From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, outward claims to being Zulu almost certainly denoted an allegiance to Buthelezi's Inkatha (Carton, 2008). By drawing on and manipulating the past, Mangosuthu Buthelezi and King Goodwill Zwelithini were able to claim a social and political precedence. During this time, Mangosuthu Buthelezi was the Prime Minister of KwaZulu and the king was, and in many instances continues to be, viewed as the custodian of broad and encompassing Zulu traditions and customs. With this status, they had access to resources like land and government funds. Buthelezi's political power (and that of Inkatha) has subsequently waned and in the present, post-apartheid dispensation, these claims to a particular socio-political status and its meaning are part of a wider public debate. This does not mean that there are efforts to collapse or undermine them. The idea of a unified "Kingdom of the Zulu" is infinitely marketable and sellable, and serves as an important aspect of KwaZulu-Natal's present-day tourism strategy. However, in diverse and interesting ways other clan-specific cultural movements are challenging the actual meaning of the king's status as the custodian of the traditions and customs of a



homogenous 'Zulu people'.

These clans enter the post-apartheid period with a particular socio-political standing, determined by their earlier and more recent histories. For those in Umbumbulu, this includes an historic alienation from central Zulu power in the north and incorporation into the KwaZulu bantustan under the Zulu nationalist Inkatha during the latter part of the twentieth century. They also enter the present with a specific historical inheritance – a legacy of the past that is available to them to draw on in determining their current socio-political status. The past is terrain that is navigated in order to establish one's social standing. It has the potential to contribute to one's level of access to resources and as such, certain elements of the past are mobilised in order to bolster status and to reinforce particular claims. The realm of tradition and custom and official government are progressively intertwined. The ANC in KwaZulu-Natal and in particular, the premier, Zweli Mkhize, are receptive to the claims of other clan movements and have begun to incorporate into the official record local clan histories that were previously suppressed. Zweli Mkhize is deeply involved in navigating these politics. He recognises the Zulu king as a custodian of overarching Zulu tradition and custom but also fosters the growth of other clans' perspectives and contributions by creating an environment that is hospitable to the emergence and recording of their pre-Zulu histories.

As part of the Office of the Premier's project on the influence of missionaries on present-day KwaZulu-Natal, Desmond Makhanya was employed as a consultant on the history of Adams College. This was an endeavour that no doubt improved his status as a local

historian and gave him access to people like Dr. Vukile Khumalo, through whom he hoped to publish his manuscript. Siyabonga Mkhize also contributed his work to another of the premier's projects, focussed on clan genealogies, a position that put him in contact with a network of academics and members of government such as Jabulani Sithole and the premier's Heritage Unit. Together with Victor Mkhize and the premier, he was also deeply involved in intra-Mkhize clan politics, the interpretation of clan history and the ongoing successor debate, stimulated, in part, by the publication of his book, *Uhlanga lwas'Embo*. The work of local historians like Siyabonga Mkhize and Desmond Makhanya thus has a bearing on contemporary identity politics in KwaZulu-Natal, particularly through their interactions with the Premier's Office. The ANC premier is trying to insert into the record a more multi-faceted, non-singularly Zulu or traditional, notion of Zuluness. The output of the research into local clan histories and the influence of missionaries on the KwaZulu-Natal region, which his office funds, is determined, in part, by the different types of local knowledge produced by the likes of Siyabonga Mkhize and Desmond Makhanya. They are able to appropriate new media to convey their local understandings, experiences and aspirations, and in doing so, contribute in important ways to the unsettling of generic ideas of identity and Zuluness.

By asserting claims for their own local histories and identities, using a variety of apparatuses, strategies and media to advance what they feel is important and should be remembered, these clans aim to empower themselves in the public arena. In subtle ways, they are beginning to challenge established notions of identity, as well as older leaders like Buthelezi and Zwelithini, who have drawn on the past to bolster and sustain their

social standing. These clans are calling for the recognition of histories and identities, long subsumed under the category Zulu, recognition that brings with it a particular socio-political standing and the capacity to gain access to resources, like land and state funds. Siyabonga Mkhize's claim for a particular lineage of the Mkhizes should be understood in the wider context of post-apartheid land claims and more specifically, the Nhlapo Commission, which was seen by many as a channel through which to attain official recognition of historical claims, access to land and state resources. In promoting a version of the Makhanya past, linked to the institutional history of Adams College, Desmond Makhanya's fundraising dinners have begun to garner public interest and monetary contributions from numerous prominent politicians and members of the public, including the state president, Jacob Zuma. The position of Adams College as an historically important *kholwa* institution and his status as college historian point to the potential he has to attract capital to maintain the Adams College buildings and develop the area around school through religio-tourism initiatives. The studies of Sithole (1998) and Mathis (2008) show that political authority, linked to a particular status and the control of land have played an important role in Umbumbulu's history, particularly during the unrest of the 1930s and the 1980s. While the desire for status and resources like land and state funding are comparable in the present, the mechanisms with which to make a claim on the past have changed. This thesis has shown some of the ways in which claims to custodianship of the past in multiple forms, based on local knowledge and experiences, have begun to shape socio-political relations and destabilise established notions of Zuluness.

### **Vernacular modernities and established modes of knowing**

I find that the framework of vernacular modernities is the most effective way of describing and understanding the multiple custodial forms and related activities of the different subjects of my study. Discourses of modernity have generally been characterised by clearly defined categories and binary oppositions like the modern versus the traditional, and the oral versus the written. In contrast to this thinking, Ran Greenstein (2009: 71 – 73) argues that modernity is an ongoing, plural and multiple process that incorporates many possible modernities that function beyond these hardened categories. He sees it as a concept that has been adopted by everyday people in order to convey their local understandings, experiences and aspirations in the context of global development and relations. Rather than shying away from these relations by advancing an alternative ‘indigenous’ or ‘traditional’ mode of knowing, people at a local level seek to reshape them, using the broad array of media, channels of communication and social and political networks at their disposal. Greenstein argues that local knowledges, based on local understanding and experience function as “spaces for destabilizing dominant modes of knowing” and can have a bearing on shaping socio-political relations.

Comaroff and Comaroff (2012: 9 – 11) maintain that modernity in Africa is not merely a *doppelganger*, a copy of the Euro-American ‘original’. Rather, as with Euromodernity or modernity of the north, Afromodernity has manifested itself in a number of registers at once and has been mired in contestation and “entangled meanings”. Modernity means different things to different people and is appropriated and moulded to suit local contexts and ways of knowing and doing, as a means to make sense of, and act, in the world. The

authors argue that modernity in Africa is not best labelled an *alternative* but, as they write: “It is a *vernacular* – just as Euromodernity is a vernacular – wrought in an ongoing, geopolitically situated engagement with the unfolding history of the present.” What I have encountered in my fieldwork looks very much like vernacular modernity in practice. The subjects of my study exhibited a desire to engage actively the role of the written record and its particular testatory power. They used modern technologies to put forward content that related to the past but instead of viewing it as anachronistic, saw it as replete with contemporary significance. They appropriated various modern technologies, media and networks to convey their local understandings, experiences and aspirations, the complexity of which resist easy classification into simple binary oppositions. The types of knowledges that flow from their activities at a local level have begun to unsettle dominant modes of knowing and shape socio-political relations, with amongst others, the Zulu royal family and the premier of KwaZulu-Natal.

The thesis has illustrated that in some instances, what looks modern is, in fact, full of materials conventionally described as ‘traditional’. For example, the Ulwazi Programme operates as a seemingly modern digital repository and yet the Ulwazi Wiki is dominated by ‘traditional Zulu’ practices, customs, folktales and ways of knowing. There are various discursive frameworks available to those engaging with the past in Umbumbulu. The Ulwazi Programme operates within a framework of indigenous knowledge and the Amakhosi Support Office within an environment governed by ideas of tradition and custom. However, on the ground, people like Siyabonga Mkhize and Desmond Makhanya were not constrained by categories like modern or traditional, nor the

government frameworks that were open to them. Rather, in inventive ways, they circumvented these categories and frameworks. They operated within and across a variety of networks, and worked in their own ways with a variety of media (books, oral forms of **history**, the Internet), crafting their own, localised versions of modernity.

Siyabonga Mkhize's project, the revival of the Mkhize clan history in the public sphere, is clearly modernist in a number of ways. While his work is situated within the domain of chiefly politics and is seemingly focussed on traditional matters, he was keenly aware of the evidentiary power of the documentary record and exhibited a clear desire to enter materials into the record in an essentially modern way. He published a book, itself a symbol of modernity, and used social media networks like Facebook to extend the reach of his work into the digital realm. In multiple ways, Siyabonga Mkhize's activities resist easy categorisation. He is an oral poet and an author of written texts, he is a traditionalist but also the leader of a Christian church, he is a producer of history, a custodian of materials and a curator of the past. Paradoxically, whilst Desmond Makhanya claimed to have written a 'modern' *kholwa* story, he focussed on the Makhanya lineage and his ancestors, employing a form of referencing the past often seen as 'traditional', as one of the means to convey this history. In his manuscript, he also noted that Adams College, one of the premier *kholwa* institutions in South Africa at the time, was a "sanctuary for *ubukhosi*" or chiefship, the operations of which are typically thought to function within the realm of tradition and custom. The above examples point to some of the complexity and fluidity involved in dealing with the past in Umbumbulu and point to the ways in which the activities of Siyabonga Mkhize and Desmond Makhanya, and the local

knowledge that emanates from them, resist and unsettle established ways of thinking that position the 'modern' and the 'traditional' in contrast to one another.

Despite the fact that they are often positioned as distinct from one another, Barber (2006) offers numerous examples from Africa in which oral and written genres exist in a close rapport. The boundaries between oral and written are porous and, as the thesis has shown, this is so much more the case in the present, exacerbated by digital technologies that offer new modes and possibilities of recording. Although the *amakhosi* asserted a traditional mode of knowing, they too, have been exposed to, and begun to employ modern technologies and modes of record-keeping. Through their interactions with the Amakhosi Support Office, the *amakhosi* are required to keep diaries, to use computers and email, and their status is increasingly determined through certification by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. However, their local, embodied knowledge has also affected their relations with, and position in, formalised government. In the early years of post-apartheid South Africa, the role that traditional leaders would play was unclear, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal where they were seen significantly to have supported Inkatha and the apartheid state. Over the last decade, they have won concessions from the state, which has granted them salaries, growing power, representation and continued jurisdiction over land. They have been incorporated into official government structures and are represented at all levels of government. Their local ways of knowing and doing have had an effect on the way in which the country is governed and in influencing socio-political relations, as they now engage with and in

some instances, have a bearing on, high-powered politicians.<sup>1</sup> To avoid future succession disputes, the Isuccession Programme requires the *amakhosi* to record their lineage and heirs in print. More and more, technology and the written record are used in conjunction with the local knowledge that the *amakhosi* possess in forms of tradition and custom, and that were historically transmitted orally. Similarly, Siyabonga Mkhize's book, written in Zulu, relied heavily on oral traditions and functioned as an extension of his role as praise poet but in written form. These examples point to an ongoing and increasingly complex blurring of the boundaries between the written and the oral.

### **Archives, custodianship and consignment**

This thesis has explored tradition, custom, indigenous knowledge and other practices for indications of the active management of materials of and from the past, processes and activities, which I have referred to and conceptualised as 'custodianship'. The variability and complexity of these practices, encompassing fixed and fluid elements and traversing multiple media including part-written manuscripts, oral and textual forms of history, the Internet as well as psycho-spiritual commune with the dead, trouble recognised ideas of record-keeping and archives, characterised by the processual management of archival records and notions of certainty, stability and evidence. This is especially true of interactions with the ancestors. In different ways, through written and oral texts, and knowledge of tradition and custom, Desmond Makhanya, Siyabonga Mkhize and particularly the *amakhosi*, all made claims on the past with reference to their forebears.

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<sup>1</sup> A recent example is President Zuma's annual address to the National House of Traditional Leaders. Although he acknowledged that the Traditional Courts Bill, which sought considerably to entrench the power of traditional leaders, was flawed, he also slated those who criticised "African culture" in the Traditional Courts Bill debate in Parliament (Business Day Live, 2012).



This thesis and other research on contemporary engagements with the past in KwaZulu-Natal like Mbongiseni Buthelezi's work on oral forms of Ndwandwe history, point to the continuing significance of the ancestors in the spiritual lives of everyday people and the importance of maintaining a good relationship with them (Buthelezi, 2012; Hamilton, 2013). The *amakhosi* perform a unique role in sustaining relationships with, and placating, the ancestors of a particular clan and in ritual healing between the ancestors of different clans in order to set right the wrongdoings of the past. These rituals are enacted by a select group of *amakhosi* and take place in an intangible, spiritual realm, and one that is seemingly far removed from ideas of a stable, formalised archive.

For writers like Jacques Derrida and Verne Harris, questions of archives and the discursive nature of record-making and record-keeping are closely connected to political power and dominant ideologies – the place of archives and of custody is the place of power, of government. This study has examined a variety of cases in which the past is being dealt with in diverse and complex ways, including claims to custodianship of the past that, in some instances, emanate from positions of marginality and not of power. The place of archives, and the archontic power to determine whether something is worthy of preservation and should be included as part of the record of the past, no longer resides exclusively with government. Local and clan historians and traditional leaders, without official apparatus or professional or disciplinary authority, all decided what they felt was worthy of custodial care and should be entered into the record. The act of custodianship – of preserving and mediating bodies of knowledge of the past – in contemporary KwaZulu-Natal is evident in numerous locations and, like the process of consignment, is

a far more intricate and multifaceted process than the discussions of archives and power by Derrida and Harris position us to see.

At the heart of Derrida's concept of archive is the notion of consignation, a key aspect of which is the delivering or depositing of materials into an archival repository, out of public circulation and with limited access, an action that enables both remembering and, once preserved, the possibility of forgetting. My study has shown forms of consignation of this kind co-existing alongside other custodial practices, which preserve and mediate the past in different ways, in multiple locations and across various media. These include the *amakhosi*'s embodiment of tradition and custom, Victor Mkhize's position as an *ikhombabukhosi*, Siyabonga Mkhize's role as an *imbongi*, and the writing of manuscripts, as yet unpublished or withdrawn. These numerous, interlinked domains of custodial activity reveal both impulses towards and away from consignation – a desire for one's version of history to be entered into the record but also anxieties surrounding this process. The thesis shows that the terms, and the act, of consignation are being keenly debated and the past is being reckoned with in ongoing ways. Consignation in contemporary KwaZulu-Natal, rather than simply being achieved, is a tenuous, volatile, subverted, indeed actively negotiated and navigated process.

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